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ABSTRACT

Designed for administrators, educators, and people interested in children's learning, this book explores ways to reawaken parents' understanding of their role as their children's first teachers. The volume is divided into four major sections. Part 1, which provides a background and rationale for developing intergenerational programming in support of family literacy, strongly supports a new focus on educating families rather than children or adults alone, provides background information about family programming, and introduces a family literacy statute. Part 2 describes three family literacy programs that focus on adults and children reading storybooks together, emphasizing give-and-take as the basis for intergenerational communication. Part 3 examines family literacy in multicultural settings, describing multilingual communities as treasure chests of linguistic and cultural riches and warns that educators can either tap and nurture these riches, or preside over their rapid demise. Part 4 addresses the practitioner who may be working alone or with a team to generate increased parent participation in children's learning, and suggests methods to encourage parent-child interaction in a literacy context. The epilogue is a reaffirmation of parenting, pointing out that the growing awareness of the family's critical contribution to children's learning underscores the need to create educational programs that are more comprehensive and holistic. Most of the chapters contain references. (AA)

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CELEBRATING FAMILY LITERACY THROUGH INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMMING

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Olta Baa Akohwiinidzin
(Literacy Awareness)

Kellamay Kelly

Almost two million Native Americans live in the United States and on some 300 reservations, 26 of which are in the state of Arizona. The Dine (formerly called Navajo) people are the largest group of indigenous people in the country, having over 200,000 members. Most still live in the traditional homeland, which extends into the states of Arizona, New Mexico and Utah. Dine Nation territory encompasses over 28,000 square miles, an area larger than the state of West Virginia and even some countries. The land, on the southern part of the Colorado Plateau, ranges from arid to semi-arid and incorporates mountain ranges, canyons and mesas. The elevation varies from 4,500 feet to over 10,000 feet above sea level. Red sandstone buttes; pink-striated, deep canyons edged by chaparral of sage, creosote and rabbit brush; and multicolored rolling hills and mesas with scarcely any noticeably visible vegetation characterize the terrain. But it is the mountainous forest areas that stir these personal reflections of my early childhood.

In the fourth year of my life I was living at home with my grandparents. They told me my parents were working far, far away and so I had to stay with them to help out. I did not mind because I was happy being with them. Waking up early to the crackling of fire and the smell of coffee, mutton, potatoes and tortillas cooking was a good way to begin each day. I remember one very special day when we went to the trading post. Grandmother had finished weaving her rug and wanted to trade for it. We were all happy and excited about this event.

I arose from the thick, warm, snug sheepskin sleeping pallet on the earthen floor and folded my shawl and quilt coverings. After I put these in a large trunk, I carried the sheepskin outside to shake out the dust and hang it to air. After eating, Grandmother and I washed and rinsed the dishes and sprinkled water on the floor to keep it firm; I used a small branch of sagebrush to sweep up the remaining dust. Then we let the sheep out of the corral to graze.

The cool, crisp air of autumn (akee) felt sharp on my face. Now and then I would hop and skip to keep up with my grandmother as she and the sheep dogs herded the sheep down the dirt road. Everything seemed huge to me. The sheep we were following walked lazily along with their heads close to the ground, still sleepy. The dogs, however, bounded eagerly about in anticipation of chasing rabbits.

As we neared our grassy destination, Grandmother moved ahead to direct the sheep. When they did not respond promptly, she rattled a tin can filled with pebbles and swung it forward by an attached wire, convincing the sheep to move off the road.

We sat down in a sunny spot for warmth and watched the sheep graze. Meanwhile, Grandmother took out some wool and began spinning yarn on a long wooden

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Kellamay Kelly is a kindergarten teacher at Window Rock Unified School District No. 8, Ft. Defiance, Arizona, in the Dine Nation.

spinning stick, whirling its pointed end against her thigh near the knee. She talked as she watched and spun, telling me about sheep and how to care for them. She also pointed out plants used for medicine, dye or food and those that were dangerous for the animals. She shared lore concerning the time of day, the season, weather conditions and how all these conditions influenced life. As always, she talked about skills for survival and for making a good livelihood. When the wool was all spun onto the spindle, she used small stones, plants, sticks and the natural contour of the land to re-create the sheep herding setting in miniature. Through this "hands-on" play, I learned to be responsible as I developed my native language.

While my grandmother (Shimasani) and I tended the sheep, my grandfather (Shisheii) prepared for the journey to the trading post. He hitched the horses to the wagon, having fed and groomed them. We herded the sheep into the corral and secured the gate. My grandmother went into the hogan and put on her jewelry and her nice shawl. Then she carefully put her newly finished rug in a clean white sack. Taking a big book from its place under his Bible, my grandfather consulted the figures he had written there.

My grandparents sat up front on the single spring seat and I sat right behind them on the wagon floor. Grandfather called to the horses and we were off, with a soft answering snort from the animals. As we bounced along the dirt road, I looked at the towering ponderosa pines with their long dark green needles, the somewhat shorter piñons laden with tasty nuts and the twisted juniper trees leaning from years of winds. Intermingled in my consciousness with these sights were the rhythmical sounds of the horses' hooves and the metallic jingling of their harnesses. I savored the warmth of the sun's rays and the coolness of the earth as we rode through valleys, up hills and past alfalfa fields. Occasionally, we spied shepherds with their sheep. When their dogs barked a greeting, my grandparents pointed out, "There is your aunt (or other relative)." In the red and gold Gambel oaks and grape holly, squirrels and chipmunks scampered in last-minute preparations for winter. Always, big black crows cawed as they lapped after morsels of food. The pungent juniper and sagebrush, the cool odor of earth and the distinctive smell of alfalfa delighted my nose. For me, the highlight of the nearly 10-mile trip came when we crossed a wooden bridge and I could see water cascading downward about seven feet where it splashed against the rocks below.

When we arrived at the trading post, we met many friends and relatives. Inside the building, the smells of coffee, candy, wood fire, fabric and new leather greeted us. When our turn with the trader came, he greeted us in Navajo. He towered, nearly as tall as a pine tree, over the high wooden counter. His skin was a different color and he spoke only brief phrases of the Navajo language, but he was friendly and nice. He and Grandmother bargained and negotiated, first the price for the rug, then for supplies needed at home and, finally, for a tiny paper sack of candy. These treats, which looked like balls of candy on a stick, would be parceled out over time until the next trip, some six months away. After the bargaining, the trader gave Grandmother a gift of two cans of stewed tomatoes; these might be eaten now or carried home to eat with a bit of sugar and a few crackers. Finally, the trader plopped a spiral notebook on the counter, and wrote in it. This impressed me as an important adult activity. As Grandmother carefully and precisely folded the bag in which she had carried the rug, the trader handed her a small, white, folded paper object. Grandmother put it into her handmade drawstring bag where she carried important personal possessions. We left the building and loaded the food and ourselves into the wagon. Grandmother told Grandfather she had a letter from my

uncle, who lived far away.

As soon as the purchases were unloaded, and the horses unhitched and turned loose, Grandmother read aloud my uncle's letter, written in the Navajo language. She intended to write back; someone else would address the envelope in English and take it to the trading post for her. Then Grandfather took the sheep out to graze and drink water. Meanwhile, Grandmother and I put the food in the cellar and on wooden box shelves nailed to the hogan wall. Then we cooked the evening meal. During the meal, my grandparents planned the next day's activities. After the meal and cleaning up, we sat around the fire to separate and card wool for spinning and weaving. My grandparents shared experiences from their lives and we talked of my uncle. Soon it was bedtime and Grandfather retired to his own small house to work, read the Bible and sleep. Grandmother read to me from her Bible until I fell asleep.

My grandparents had had no formal schooling, but could read and write fluently in the Navajo language. The first books ever printed in the Navajo (Dine) language were Bibles, which appeared in the early years of the 20th century. My grandparents told me that one day I would have to go away to school. I did not understand this type of talk. Life as I knew it was beautiful and did not lack for learning experiences; each season was filled with its own unique customs. Autumn was a time to renew and replenish. We were all busy preparing for winter. The whole family joined in chopping wood, hauling hay and harvesting and storing food. As far as I was concerned, my daily experiences *were* school.

. . . To be continued

INTRODUCTION

Margaret Matthias and Beverly Gulley

The rich fabric of relationships described in the Prologue provides a wonderful image of the home as the foundation for important learning experiences. Kellamay Kelly documents the intergenerational activities that formed the basis for her understanding of the world. Her family taught her love, respect and how to work together. She learned her culture's survival skills of herding, spinning and weaving; she learned responsibility for self, animals and land; she learned about work rewarded and time well spent; she learned the excitement of story and how print can join friends long parted; she learned the importance of numbers for documenting trade; and she learned the security of family and friends.

How many of today's families send their children to school already possessing the advantages described by the author of "Olta Baa Akohwiinidzin"? For many children, their parents' work is only vaguely recognizable as related to survival. And children are rarely involved in their parents' working life. Many parents come home exhausted and must attend to family chores in the most expedient way before rushing through meals and getting children to a variety of organized activities. Television often functions as a baby sitter while the adults prepare meals and run errands. Parents who cannot find work have so little belief left in their own skills that they often lack the confidence to build a supportive learning environment for their children. Many find the mainstream culture to be in such opposition to their own that they feel incapable of helping their children "prepare" for school.

Celebrating Family Literacy Through Intergenerational Programming explores ways to reawaken parents' understanding of their role as their children's first teachers. It acknowledges what the Prologue so colorfully draws for us in its poignant picture of a time past—the importance of intergenerational learning experiences. Such experiences emphasize the value of reading, writing, figuring and problem-solving together; they establish family traditions and values and promote cultural transmission. The growing awareness of the family's critical contribution to children's learning underscores the need to create educational programs that are more comprehensive and holistic than ever before.

Designed for administrators, adult educators, preschool teachers, teachers of primary-age children and anyone interested in children's learning, this volume should help tap the wonderful resource of the home. The volume is divided into four major sections. Sharon Darling's introductory chapter sets the stage for Part I, which provides a background and rationale for developing intergenerational programming in support of family literacy. "Family Literacy, the Legacy of Learning" strongly supports a new focus on educating families, rather than children or adults alone. Darling, President and Founder of the National Center for Family Literacy in Louisville, Kentucky, calls for a two-generational solution to a two-generational problem. Family literacy programs, she believes, can form the link between undereducated adults and their "at-risk" children. She celebrates not only the learning partnerships that are being created in the home, but also the community part-

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nerships that have developed in support of family literacy programs.

Linda B. Cooper and Michael F. Kelley continue the focus of Part I by providing background information about family programming. They review the role changes that our schools and communities experience as they accept the challenges of modern life. The authors reiterate the importance of community partnerships when redefining programming for today's children and their families, and they explore the developmental nature of these collaborative ventures. As an example, they describe one school district's family literacy program that exemplifies the broad scope of such programming and offers important possibilities for other educators who recognize the need for improved educational opportunities for families.

The third and last chapter of Part I is introduced by U.S. Representative Bill Goodling from Pennsylvania, author of a family literacy statute. The statute was designed to improve educational opportunities for children and adults in the U.S. by integrating early childhood education, adult education and parenting education into a unified program. The main body of the chapter provides some reflections on four years of such programming in rural Illinois. These reflections are documented by Gail Snavely, Program Coordinator of the federally funded project, Southern Region Even Start.

Part II celebrates the proliferation of family literacy programs that focus on adults and children reading storybooks together. Ann M. Mowery warns, however, that many of these training programs for parents place the primary focus on the adult's role as the "lead player" in this activity. In her chapter,"The Critical Role of the Child in Storybook Reading," Mowery explains why she feels the child plays a much more critical role and proceeds to show how she incorporated this belief into the storybook reading program she developed and implemented in her school.

Donna Celano and Susan B. Neuman emphasize the urgent need to develop specialized services for adolescent mothers and their children, and describe such a program funded by the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy. Funding enabled the authors to add a parent-child interaction component to existing adult education, early childhood education and parenting programs. Through collaboration with school staff, they were able to integrate the curriculum for these programs. Adolescent mothers receive a simple four-part framework for enhancing their participation with their children.

Claudia Quigg and Jan Mandernach's chapter describing the Baby TALK program concludes Part II. This collaborative program combines the expertise of schools, libraries, hospitals, health departments and volunteer literacy programs to deliver an exciting program of "language, literacy and love for infants." The program supports parental nurturing of very young children, with a strong focus on "anticipatory guidance." Quigg and Mandernach stress that the more parents know about how their child develops, the better equipped they will be to deal with parenting challenges. The program emphasizes using books in developmentally appropriate ways at every stage of children's lives.

While all three of the programs described in Part II use books as the focus of an intergenerational activity, we must recognize the importance of the intergenerational bond that is reinforced by sharing a topic of mutual interest. Each of the programs emphasize give-and-take as the basis for intergenerational communication.

Kellamay Kelly continues the story she began in the Prologue as an introduction to Part III. The stark new reality of her first years of formal schooling highlight the failure of past education programs to value rich family heritages. Her story finishes on a hopeful note and is followed by Sigmund A. Boloz's chapter, "Weaving

Parents as Partners: A Navajo School's Design," which offers some innovative and respectful ways to narrow the gap between the culture of home and school in the Dine Nation. Part III celebrates the gains we have made toward respecting and valuing cultural diversity.

Joan Brooks McLane and Deirdre Graziano celebrate the catharsis experienced by Head Start mothers as they learn to "redo" school through their writing projects. Negative school experiences had disenfranchised these women from the cultural mainstream. The Head Start mothers described in this chapter no longer associate reading and writing with shame, embarrassment, punishment or exclusion. As they gained a sense of confidence in their own writing abilities, these young women became empowered to build happier, more productive educational experiences for their children.

Gail Weinstein-Shr shares the insights she has gained in working with bilingual and culturally diverse families. For those facing the challenge of starting a family literacy program for language minority families, Weinstein-Shr suggests a series of questions that might guide initial communication with the community in order to enlist the most effective assistance. She concludes Part III by describing multilingual communities as treasure chests of linguistic and cultural riches and warns us that educators can either tap and nurture these riches, or preside over their rapid demise.

Part IV speaks to the practitioner who may be working alone or with a team to generate increased parent participation in children's learning. Robert E. Rockwell, et al. describe science as an often overlooked vehicle for generating parent/child interaction in comfortable and meaningful ways. Allison Reeves, an ESL teacher, describes the innovative ways in which she encourages parents and children to increase their English fluency while working on interactive homework. She uses trade books as the center of these activities, but also describes interesting cooking activities and creative literature extensions that can become extremely purposeful activities for both parent and child.

In the final chapter of Part IV, Deborah Moberly and Barbara Grace suggest many interesting and useful ways in which parent educators can help parents set and attain workable goals for themselves and their families. Practitioners will find the charts included here to be a helpful resource for documenting parents' goals and providing parents with constant reassurance that they are making progress.

The Epilogue by Linda Nelson is a reflection on parenting, a reaffirmation that parents are the first and most important teachers our children will ever have. We find much to celebrate as educators recognize the family's rich contributions and enter a partnership with the home to develop the most supportive of all environments for children's learning.

Family Literacy, the Legacy of Learning

Sharon Darling

If you grew up in a home where cuddling and story time with your parents was a nightly ritual and silly songs and counting games accompanied each excursion in the car, you lived *family literacy* long before the term was coined. Because of those childhood experiences, you no doubt have shared a love of learning with the children in your life. This love is a precious legacy handed down to each generation through example. By the time a child enters school, a wealth of family experiences have created a solid foundation for new learning.

But literacy development is not always that easy. Millions of children entering school this year have never giggled over the joyful nonsense of a Dr. Seuss rhyme, nor have been challenged to count the leaves on a tree just for the fun of it. They come to school with no traditions that connect family and literacy and, therefore, no foundation upon which to build new learning. To describe these children we use terms such as "at-risk" or "disadvantaged" to evoke missed opportunities and discouraging predictions. We know that one-fifth of American 1st-graders are from poor families and half of these children start school as much as two years behind their peers (Brizius & Foster, 1993). About 20 percent of our preschool-age children live in poverty and are more likely than their more affluent peers to have parents with less than a high school education (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1993). Not only do these children lack the advantages of an educated parent, they also are less likely to be exposed to educational opportunities outside the home (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993a). In addition, children from low-income families drop out at more than twice the rate of children from middle-income families and ten times the rate of children from high-income families (National Center for Education Statistics, 1993b).

Educators have tackled at-risk children's problems with varying degrees of only short-term success, at best. We have tried competency testing, promising to retain children until they learn. Experience tells us, however, that a child who is held back has a 50 percent increased chance of dropping out: if held back twice, this chance increases to 90 percent (Darling, 1992). Preschool programs take poor children out of their families for part, or all, of the day at ever younger ages in order to "catch them while they're young." However well intentioned, this approach sends the wrong message to parents about their ability to assist with their children's learning. The resulting implication that only teachers should teach not only perpetuates the low self-esteem of some parents, but also sets up an impossible task for our schools.

In recent years, we have placed more emphasis on the parents' role by encouraging parental involvement in school. Unfortunately, this approach often ignores the

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parents' educational deficiencies. Adults who are embarrassed by their own low literacy skills or haunted by memories of academic failure are intimidated by schools. So we have addressed their lack of skills by providing adult education. Educating parents alone, however, does not necessarily change parental behaviors and interactions with children. Time and targeted strategies are needed if we are to change the messages about education in the home environment. Furthermore, statistics show that 40 percent of adults who enter an adult education program drop out within the first 12 hours and only 20 percent typically remain 100 hours or more (Development Associates, 1993).

Through all these efforts we have separated children and their parents, as if we could solve everything by dealing with one generation or the other. This simply cannot work on a long-term basis. Millions of children still enter school lagging behind their peers and millions of adults lack basic skills. We are dealing with a two-generational problem that demands a two-generational solution. We need systemic change, not a quick fix. Consider that 40 percent of female single parents have an 8th-grade education or less and 75 percent of female heads of households with less than a high school education live in poverty (Center on Education and Training for Employment, 1989). Add to these findings the pivotal fact that children's literacy levels are strongly linked to the education levels of their parents, especially their mothers, and we have an even stronger case for a family approach to education (Darling, 1992).

Statistics paint a bleak picture for families trapped by poverty and undereducation. Without an education, parents are unlikely to earn enough to ensure their family's economic security. Without an understanding of child development, parents are unable to offer the kind of experiences that are so important in children's preschool years. They do not realize that reading to their children, talking with them, playing number games and singing songs are all valid learning activities. Without basic skills, parents cannot support their children academically as they move through the education system. Without confidence in their own ability to learn, parents are unable to share a love of learning or instill a desire in their children to reach their full potential. In turn, their children are likely to follow their parents' example, dropping out of school and eventually repeating the same tragic pattern with their own children unless something *dramatic* happens to change this all-too-predictable course (Darling, 1992).

In countless communities across the United States, thankfully, something dramatic *is* happening! Family literacy programs are positively affecting the lives of participating families and the infrastructure that supports them. What makes family literacy a better solution than those tried in the past? Simply stated, family literacy accounts for the link between undereducated adults and their "at-risk" children. Programs work with parents and children simultaneously, honoring the strengths of both. The family as a unit, not the individual adult or child, becomes the main focus.

The components of a comprehensive family literacy program are adult education, early childhood education, intergenerational activities and a parent group time. These components may be configured in many ways, but are intensive in terms of duration. Changes take time. Family literacy is not a quick fix, but rather is a well-planned strategy that requires commitment by staff and participants.

Adult education can mean increasing basic skills, preparing for a GED or high school equivalent, or learning English as a second language. Family concerns and family issues must be acknowledged as part of the learners' context. In the early

childhood component, children have opportunities to develop cognitive and physical skills through a wide range of active explorations and experiences. A block of time is used for intergenerational activities, allowing children to see their parents experiencing the joy of learning and making the connection between education and the quality of life. The child leads these activities and the adult provides support for play as a learning experience. The fourth component of family literacy programs, parent group time, offers a chance for adults to discuss parenting and employment issues. The adults can face and overcome similar obstacles together. Integration of these four components provides the sustaining energy for this two-generational approach.

The next question to ask is "Does the program work?" In city after city, in family after family, the answer is YES! The personal words of a program graduate reflect this success:

> *Now that I am going back to school with my son, my youngest is more independent. He is coming out more and he is making friends. My eldest is not a problem, but a partner, in homework and in housework . . . He was an F student before and now he is an Honor Student with perfect attendance! I am very proud of his turn-around. He brags about me to his teacher!*

Family and program successes have been documented in hard data, as well. In a national demonstration project generously funded by Toyota Motor Corporation through the National Center for Family Literacy, the short-term results (after two years of operation) are indeed promising. This demonstration project, the Toyota Families for Learning Program, is located at 56 sites in 15 major cities across the country: Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Denver, Colorado; Fort Lauderdale, Florida; Little Rock, Arkansas; Los Angeles, California; Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Nashville, Tennessee; New Orleans, Louisiana; Richmond, Virginia; Rochester, New York; St. Louis, Missouri; Seattle, Washington; and Tucson, Arizona.

Positive results illustrate the power of family literacy to increase skills, nurture parent-child relationships and expand family goals (Philliber Research Associates, 1993). Although the results are dramatic, the accomplishments only reinforce what adult and child educators have been saying for years: Good programs are long-term, comprehensive and focused on the needs, interests and context of the learner. The Toyota Families for Learning Program experience supports the following truths about family literacy programs:

- ★ Family literacy programs have more holding power than typical adult education programs nationwide.
  - The family approach used in the Toyota Families for Learning Program encourages the adult learner to commit time to learning, for themselves and for their families. More than 69 percent of the participants completed more than 100 hours, which is the approximate time needed to increase skills by one grade level. This compares to a 20 percent completion rate in typical adult programs.
- ★ Parents in family literacy programs increase their literacy skills by nearly twice as much as adults in typical adult education programs.
  - Most families that entered the program were in a downward spiral of failure fed by unemployment, poverty and lack of education. The adults' aca-

demic skills were inadequate to cope with the problems that at-risk families encounter daily.

- By the end of the program, these same adults had increased their skills by an average of 1.5 grade levels, compared to the .75 grade level gain typical in adult education programs.
- The adults in the Toyota Families for Learning Program have positioned themselves to pass the GED, apply for community college or job training, meet the challenges of everyday life and work toward goals they once thought were unattainable. Even more, the family focus shows parents how to encourage their children to follow their newly found example of academic achievement and high self-esteem. The spiral of failure has been reversed to one of success and fulfillment that affects the entire family.

★ Children in family literacy programs are poised for academic success.

- Like their parents, the children entered this program far behind their peers from more advantaged homes. The 3- and 4-year-olds generally scored at the bottom 10 percent nationally on pretests. Without intervention, these children are likely to remain behind and eventually leave school without a high school diploma. But the upward spiral that lifts their parents toward success also moves these children. By the end of the year, most were at the 20th percentile and beyond. With the support of their parents and a solid kindergarten experience, these children will be successful in school.

★ Educationally supportive home environments were created by family literacy programs.

- Changes in family interaction are perhaps the most dynamic. By changing the parents' views of attainable goals for themselves, family literacy programs are expanding their children's range of success. The upward spiral of success embraces the family and has an impact on all the generations to follow.

Family literacy illustrates perfectly what we mean when we talk about a "new approach" to family education. Plus, the learning partnerships created in the home are being mirrored by community partnerships. In the 15 cities participating in the Toyota program, the private and public sectors have joined forces to support family literacy programs with financial and human resources. The initial $5.1 million grant from Toyota Motor Corporation has been tripled by collaborating agency contributions. The community partnerships will remain in place after the grant's three-year term is over because of the personal and professional commitment to families by the more than 200 agencies involved.

The power of family literacy does not end with its impact on families and communities. It can and should have great influence on national policy reforms. Where does family literacy fit in the national agenda? The connections that link social policy decisions to strong families, schools to literate families and economic development to self-sufficient families place family literacy at the core of any national education reform movement.

When we speak of education reform, we must expand our focus beyond children enrolled in preK-12, with a few parent involvement activities thrown in on the side. We must address the education needs of the entire family, ways to support education in the home and how to improve parent-child interactions. Comprehensive family literacy programs address these issues. And comprehensive family literacy programs can and must teach the education reformers.

When we speak of welfare reform, we must identify strategies that will move families from dependence to independence over the long term. Getting a GED and/or learning English as a second language are good, but only first, steps toward independence. Skills such as cooperation, teamwork, problem solving and self-confidence are necessary, yet too often ignored. These important skills need to be enhanced by family literacy programs. A good family literacy program attends to the subsequent advanced steps of setting reasonable goals for independence, keeping progress constant and achieving the goals. Through family literacy, we can and must advocate for a new vision of welfare reform that not only moves adults from dependence to independence, but also strengthens the family at the same time.

When we speak of health care, we must realize that insurance coverage and access are only parts of the issue. What we really need to focus on is education, the knowledge and desire to practice preventive care with the self-esteem to follow through, and the confidence to seek help when needed. In addition, parents must believe that how they guide their families' nutrition, rest, exercise and fun really does make a difference to the family's physical and mental health. Quality family literacy programs address these health issues head-on. We must always remember that young children in poverty live with poor parents. Infants or toddlers do not decide to receive health care services—their parents do!

As members of the family literacy community, we must point out these links with reform issues at every opportunity—at the local, state and federal levels. But more than that, we must be active in policy development, research and practice in order for family literacy to play the role that it must to strengthen the nation.

It may not happen immediately, but if all of us work together, comprehensive family literacy programs can become a part of every community. They will be strong programs of the highest quality. They will be supported by numerous funding streams. This funding does not have to be new money, but can be old money redirected to have the most impact.

These programs will be based on solid research and supported by policies at every level that encourage collaboration among public agencies and the private sector. This vision will include teachers, administrators, case workers, researchers, community leaders and others who are now in the process of developing a whole new paradigm that is family literacy, and a whole new legacy of learning.

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Parent/Family/Community Collaboration: Making a Difference in the Lives of Children

Linda B. Cooper and Michael F. Kelley

A school system without parents at its foundation is just like a bucket with a hole in it.
—Jesse Jackson (Nedler & McAfee, 1979, preface)

The old adage that parents are a child's first teachers is as true today as ever. A great deal has changed, however, in family structure and in community organization over the past 50 years. Profound societal changes have resulted in a more transient life for many children and families. One-fourth of all children today are born into poverty, and almost half a million annually are born to teenage mothers (Gregg, 1993). Far more children live with single parents, are highly mobile, live away from extended family and have mothers who work outside the home than did children even a generation ago (Kagan, 1991). Births to unwed mothers and divorce will cause 60 percent of children to live in single parent households at some point (Gregg, 1993). These data reflect children's increased personal and social needs and underscore the necessity for new school/parent/community relationships.

This chapter will explore the changing roles that schools and communities in the United States are experiencing as a consequence of societal changes. A multiple-year research effort on school and community partnerships begun by Kelley and an intensive independent study by Cooper provided the data foundation.

Historical Perspective

Two hundred years ago, parents and the community controlled U.S. schools. Parents chose the teachers and curriculum. The curriculum reflected the community's culture and beliefs. Change was slow and societal stability was a valued commodity.

By the late 1800s, many schools were located in urban settings and were designed to socialize immigrant children to the American way of life. Educators frequently visited immigrant homes to teach American child-rearing techniques (Nedler & McAfee, 1979), focusing on middle-class values such as cleanliness, cooperation and self-discipline. Control of schools began to move away from the parents.

By 1900, parent involvement in schools consisted largely of middle-class mothers in organized groups. Tests and schools reflected white, middle-class culture. Economically disadvantaged parents, often afraid of schools and teachers, felt excluded. This distancing of parents from schools has evolved into what modern teachers sometimes perceive to be parental apathy. Educators tend to believe that low-income people either do not value education highly or have little to offer (Jennings, 1992).

Several other barriers to active parental involvement exist. Some parents appear intimidated by schools and the specialized language used by educators. Bad

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memories of previous school experience influence parental perceptions. In some communities, teachers have trouble contacting parents. Moreover, the current complexity of society has contributed to disenfranchisement. Health and welfare issues cannot now be separated from education problems (Kelley & Surbeck, 1991). Yet, many of our schools do not appear adequately prepared to deal with this complexity. Some of the greatest barriers to parental involvement are outdated assumptions about childhood, family and community.

Benefits of Partnerships

Parents and communities should first become involved in a child's education by providing for the child's health and safety and by building home conditions that support school learning (Epstein, 1988). Parental and community involvement in schools themselves can include attending and supporting school events, volunteering in the classroom, working with teachers to support educational plans for students and taking part in governance, budgeting and advocacy affairs (Epstein, 1988; Kelley, Fitterer, Kling, Timbrooks, Kirkwood & Calvin, 1995).

Through parent participation, the schools acquire a greater knowledge of the child, the child's family values enrich the school's sensitivity to the child and the child believes school is important to the family (Scott-Jones, 1988). Although research findings are mixed regarding the effects of parental involvement, such involvement is generally perceived to be a strong influence on a child's school success.

In a review of 49 studies, Henderson (1988) found that none showed parental involvement to be related to a drop in test scores. In fact, "programs incorporating strong parent involvement produce students who perform better than identical programs that do not involve parents as much, or that do not involve them at all" (Henderson, 1988, p. 60). While few studies say what type of parental involvement is best, Henderson's (1988) review of research reports that well-planned, comprehensive and long-lasting involvement is most likely to help the schools meet young children's needs. Working together, at the very least, allows schools and families to maximize their efforts and share their resources.

Family Support

Schools must not only enlist parental support in the child's education, but also provide family support services. If the child's basic physical, social and emotional needs are not being met, schools cannot effectively meet the child's academic needs. In order to ensure that a child is ready to learn when he comes to school each day, families in crisis need support services (Kelley & Surbeck, 1991).

In short, family support programs enhance the family's functioning (Finger, 1991a). They foster self-sufficiency and build on the family's strengths by offering formal and informal support according to the family's needs and preferences. These programs emphasize prevention and maintenance, rather than remediation. Family support systems assist families as they cope with challenges. Finger (1991a) lists the components of family support programs:

- ★ life skills training
- ★ parent information classes and support groups
- ★ parent-child activities
- ★ information and referral services
- ★ crisis intervention and family counseling
- ★ basic support services (food, clothing, transportation).

In an effort to reach as many people as possible, education authorities (Copple, 1990; Kelley & Surbeck, 1991; Rich, 1987; Zigler & Gilman, 1991) are calling for the grouping of family support services at school sites. "Ambiguity and inequity have characterized the development of highly segregated and fragmented services to America's young children" (Kagan, 1991, p. 28). Consolidating services at one site helps to eliminate this fragmentation. Schools are located in nearly every neighborhood and are, therefore, convenient to families. Local school site planning councils are familiar with the needs of their communities and can develop comprehensive, integrated programs linked to family support services. "Schools must do more than merely refer students to social services and health departments. They must become multiple service brokers for children. They must look for the bridge connecting school and home with the broader community" (Edwards & Young, 1992, p. 76).

The Developmental Nature of Collaborative Ventures

Because current services are so fragmented and confusing, many eligible families are not even aware of services available to them. Furthermore, the services often are located too far away. Studies on the interrelatedness of the individual, the family and the community call for collaboration (Kagan, 1991). "Collaborations are defined as organizational and interorganizational structures where resources, power and authority are shared and where people are brought together to achieve common goals that could not be accomplished by a single individual or organization independently" (Kagan, 1991, p. 3).

Collaboration is often confused with the related processes of coordination and cooperation. According to Kagan (1991), collaboration is a construct that is different from, and more complex than, coordination or cooperation. While conceptually related, the three concepts form a hierarchical relationship with cooperation at the base and collaboration at the apex. Figure 1 outlines the defining characteristics and outcomes of these three related constructs.

Figure 1:
COLLABORATION, COORDINATION & COOPERATION HIERARCHY:
Defining Characteristics and Outcomes of the Related Concepts

Net Effect	Concept	Defining Characteristics
Joint planning occurs Sharing and pooling of resources Sharing of power & authority Expertise restructured	COLLABORATION	Previously separated organizations are merged into a new structure More sophisticated and complex
Agencies remain independent in power and authority, some resource sharing May result in specific modifications in the way agencies operate	COORDINATION	Less sophisticated or complex Involves efforts to smooth relationships among organizations Prerequisite to collaboration
Participants and organizations retain their independent autonomy Resources are not necessarily pooled Power is neither shared nor yielded to a third party	COOPERATION	Least formal and most prevalent Exists without clearly defined structures Superficial awareness of one another's programs and goals

As one progresses from cooperation through coordination to collaboration, interorganizational relationships become sophisticated, complex and more effective for problem solving. By examining a variety of collaborative ventures, Kagan (1991) discovered that most successful programs appear to pass through common developmental stages. The idea for collaboration is born in the *Formation* stage. Lippitt and Van Til (1981) refer to this stage as the articulation of a vision through member selection, problem identification and initial strategy proposal. Next, in the *Conceptualization* stage, participants adopt formal policy statements, objectives and administrative structures. A common purpose is identified, along with a common interpretation of the future.

In the *Development* stage, participants develop a formal structure that will sustain the collaborative efforts. They "institutionalize the shared meanings and prevailing norms" (Gray, 1985, p. 913). Typically, coordinators design permanent structures and assign issues and problems to work groups. During this stage, philosophy is transformed into practice.

In the *Implementation* stage, decisions made during the earlier stages are now carried out at the administrative and service delivery levels. Policy changes may be made and agencies can interact according to the agreed-upon structures. In the *Evaluation* stage, actual performance levels are compared to expectations. This is a time for "renewal and review of the validity of the dream that brought the collaboration into existence" (Lippitt & Van Til, 1981, p. 10). All attempts are made to determine whether the venture is a success. According to Kagan (1991), effectiveness, equity, adequacy of resources and efficiency should serve as the evaluation dimensions.

The last stage is the *Termination* stage. Any needed adjustments in programs or policies often occur here. Frequently, as one collaborative effort ends due to success or failure, new ones arise. Thus, the developmental process takes on a cyclical nature.

While characterizing the developmental process of collaboration, Kagan (1991) also identified mediating variables that directly influence the success or failure of the collaborative effort. These variables include the importance of common goals, the pooling and sharing of available resources, the sharing of power and authority among group members, and the inherent flexibility for rapid change within the collaborative venture. As we will see when we examine specific school/family/community collaborative programs, all of these variables have the potential for greatly influencing the ventures' structure and success.

State Responses to Interagency Collaboration

Edward Zigler, one of Head Start's founders, has developed a model school of the 21st century based on a collaborative design (Zigler & Gilman, 1991). This 21st-century school would support families from the time of a child's birth. School would be open from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. All-day preschool care and after-school and vacation care for school-age children would be available on a sliding fee basis. Schools would house family support and child care services along with traditional, formal schooling programs. Outreach programs, home visits, parent education and information, and community service referrals would be included in this model.

Programs similar to Zigler's "school of the 21st century" are appearing around the country. Kelley & Surbeck (1991) found government offices designed for coordinating collaborative planning of child/family services in five states: New Jersey, Illinois, Iowa, New York and Virginia. California and Minnesota have state interagency coordinating councils. Kentucky, Minnesota, Missouri and Connecticut have

each developed programs at the state level that promote parent involvement and aim to link social services to schools (Copple, 1990; Finger, 1991b).

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) established school councils for site-based decision-making. These councils include parent membership. KERA also created a task force to establish family resource centers near schools. These resource centers provide child care, linkage to social services, parent education and help to families with special needs children. They also recruit parents as school volunteers. The state general assembly appropriates funds for the centers through grants.

Minnesota has been involved in family education longer than any other state (Copple, 1990). Funding is provided through a state funding formula, program fees, federal grants and gifts from foundations. Services include simultaneous classes for children and parents, home visits, access to toys and books through lending libraries, and programs for special needs populations. All children from birth to kindergarten and their parents are eligible (Copple, 1990).

Missouri is the only state to mandate parent education and family support in every school district. The program, New Parents as Teachers, is over 10 years old (Kelley & Surbeck, 1991; Pfannenstiel & Seltzer, 1989). This program, funded with state and local monies, includes home visits designed to teach parents ways to enhance a child's development from birth to 3. Schools continue support and contact with the families after the child turns 3 (Copple, 1990). In St. Louis, the Walbridge Caring Communities Project serves students and families of one of the local elementary schools. This project is governed by the Missouri Departments of Secondary and Elementary Education, Social Services, Mental Health and Health, as well as the St. Louis Public Schools. An interagency team of mid-level staff from the partner agencies oversee the Caring Communities project.

The Connecticut Family Resource Center Program (FRCP), established in 1988, provides comprehensive, integrated community-based family support at school sites (Finger, 1991b). The FRCP offers parents prenatal guidance and information about child development, and conducts vision and hearing screening for infants and preschoolers. Home visits, peer support, child care and adult education (GED, ESL) are all elements of this program. Begun at three demonstration sites by the Connecticut Department of Human Resources, the program has grown to include five additional sites.

In San Diego, California, the New Beginnings initiative targets families in the Hamilton Elementary School area. A governance agreement exists among administrators and directors of community schools and various government and social service agencies. This group acts as the executive council for the initiative, determining policy, approving project plans and budgets, and authorizing the New Beginnings Council to supervise staff and day-to-day operations.

In her book on collaboration, Kagan (1991) also documents successful early care and education collaboratives in Colorado, Idaho, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin.

Family/School/Community Collaboration in Arizona

Thirty-six centers in Arizona currently provide school-based/school-linked community services. Approximately 500 such centers operate nationally (Together We Care, 1994). Eight Arizona centers administer both primary health care and social services. Primary health services, usually provided by nurse practitioners, gener-

ally include treatment of disease, immunizations, physicals and health education.

A number of local schools and agencies in Arizona are collaborating to provide these necessary services. A specific description of one such program follows. The information was gathered through on-site visits, program personnel interviews and document reviews conducted at the Murphy Elementary School District.

Murphy Elementary District

The four K-8 schools of Murphy Elementary District are located in south-central Phoenix, an economically disadvantaged area where 95 percent of the students live below the poverty level. Dr. Robert Donofrio, Superintendent of Schools, realized long ago that academic instruction alone was not enough for the children in his district. He envisions schools becoming community hubs—safe places where families in crisis can find the assistance they need to provide stable home environments. "Schools belong to the community," maintains Donofrio. They need to extend beyond the traditional school day, be open early and stay open late.

Murphy District currently collaborates with approximately 40 separate services. Perhaps the most significant connection was the location of a Department of Economic Services (DES) office on one of the school campuses. The Murphy Family Assistance Center is located just yards from the school. Once the services were made more accessible, the center's case load jumped from 1,400 to 1,900. Now families can get food stamps, emergency assistance, medical care for children and receive benefits from the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, all in one place.

A central belief behind these efforts is that children in crisis cannot learn well. One of the district's first actions was hiring two community workers, people from the community who had beaten the odds and "made it." Trained community workers are located in the on-campus Family Resource Center and at each school campus. They collaborate with the DES personnel and help families navigate the bureaucracy. Families who may not be eligible for welfare can get short-term assistance in times of crisis.

One of the district's goals is to help people break free from poverty. Instruction for the General Equivalency Diploma and English as a Second Language lessons are provided on campus. Child management classes, an attempt to prevent child abuse, are also offered. Parents who are enrolled in school or job training may qualify for the district's unique Wrap-Around Head Start Program.

Thirteen federally-funded Head Start centers and two state-funded At-Risk Preschools are located in the district. Preschool children of eligible parents attend an extended version of the traditional four-hour Head Start day. The Wrap-Around Head Start room is open until 6:30 p.m. DES child care subsidy vouchers allow parents to benefit from quality care at little or no cost. Not only do parents have the opportunity to work and/or go to school, they also learn about child care and nutrition.

Teachers in Murphy District refer children in crisis to district support services. Murphy teachers are trained to recognize possible instances of child abuse and how to make referrals. Future plans are for teachers to become more integral parts of assistance teams. A committed leader, a "can-do" attitude and an impressive web of collaborative services are making a difference in this Phoenix neighborhood.

Conclusions

Programs such as those in the Murphy Elementary School District illustrate the trend in Arizona towards family, school and community linkages that seems to parallel the direction that education is taking throughout the United States. Yet Ari-

zona is still in the early stages of state-promoted collaborations for children and families. The 1994 Arizona Child and Family Stability Act created an immunization outreach program, at-risk preschools, a child abuse prevention program and a family literacy program.

Collaborations at state and local levels appear to meet the increased needs of today's children and families. We know that children do not leave problems related to hunger, neglect, illness or poverty at home. In order for teachers to reach children academically, they must reach out to parents and the community and begin meeting children's basic needs. As Kagan (1991) has so cogently reminded us, collaborative ventures work best under several prime conditions. The goals of the venture must be clear and the climate and context for change must be fertile. The programs described earlier in this chapter are successful because the people involved are deeply committed. The program structure matches the mission, and the mandates to fulfill the mission are facilitative rather than restrictive. Their policies and processes are clear and well communicated.

Finally, the program participants have taken a comprehensive view of children and families and have successfully marshaled resources from a variety of sources. In the end, one finds a vibrant, personalized, family-centered set of experiences that make a compelling difference in the lives of children—a difference we can celebrate.

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Even Start: A New Beginning

Gail Snavely
Introduction by U.S. Representative Bill Goodling

In this opening statement, Congressman Bill Goodling of the 19th District of Pennsylvania provides a historical perspective of the Even Start family literacy programs. Such programs are designed to improve the educational opportunities of the nation's children and adults by integrating early childhood education and adult education for parents into a unified program. Congressman Goodling is the author of legislation that established the Even Start programs, which are intended to be implemented through cooperative projects that build on existing community resources to create a new range of services.

As a former educator, I know firsthand the importance of parental involvement in children's education. I am also cognizant of the important role education plays and will continue to play in our efforts to keep this country strong. Technology has eliminated many of the jobs that previously did not require high school diplomas or advanced job skills. Today's job market demands individuals with more advanced and finely tuned skills than ever before. Now more than ever, we have to keep students in school until they complete their education and work with those who have dropped out or have low literacy levels to ensure they acquire the skills necessary to be self-sufficient, contributing members of society. The earlier we work with children and their families, the better the long-term outcomes.

Unfortunately, the statistics concerning literacy in the United States are not good. In a recent national adult literacy survey, approximately 40 million adults scored in the lowest level of the literacy scale. Twenty percent of the population have only minimal basic skills. Of major concern is that many of these individuals are parents.

The Even Start Family Literacy Program is an outgrowth of my many years as an educator. It is based on the knowledge that children who have parents who can help and support them in their educational endeavors are more likely to succeed than those who have parents with low literacy skills and little knowledge of how to help their children achieve in school.

Even Start is based on a program I started when I was the Superintendent of the Spring Grove School District in Pennsylvania. We had begun to notice that many of our young students were performing poorly, despite receiving additional assistance at school. Some of their difficulties arose from the fact that their parents

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were unable to assist them with their class work because they, themselves, had low levels of educational achievement. The program we developed to address this concern was based on the concept of a family literacy program. Not only did this new program provide extra support for our at-risk children, it also provided educational assistance and parenting education to help raise parents' literacy skills and provide them with the parenting skills necessary to help their children perform well in school.

By empowering parents to truly be their children's first and most important teachers, we can increase their involvement in their children's education and improve the parent/child relationship. In addition, we can build the parent's self-esteem and thus enhance their confidence in their ability to assist their children with homework and encourage them to take part in school activities.

Since enactment of the Even Start Program in 1988, I have received numerous reports about the program's success from every region of the country. Most often, I hear that the family literacy concept is what makes Even Start work and what makes it more successful than other programs with similar goals.

I believe family literacy programs are an important tool for attacking many of the social ills plaguing our country today. Family literacy programs can play a major role in welfare reform and crime prevention programs. When we realize that two-thirds of the country's dropouts, delinquents and teenage parents have poor literacy skills, it becomes evident that education can play a major role in determining the success or failure of our youth.

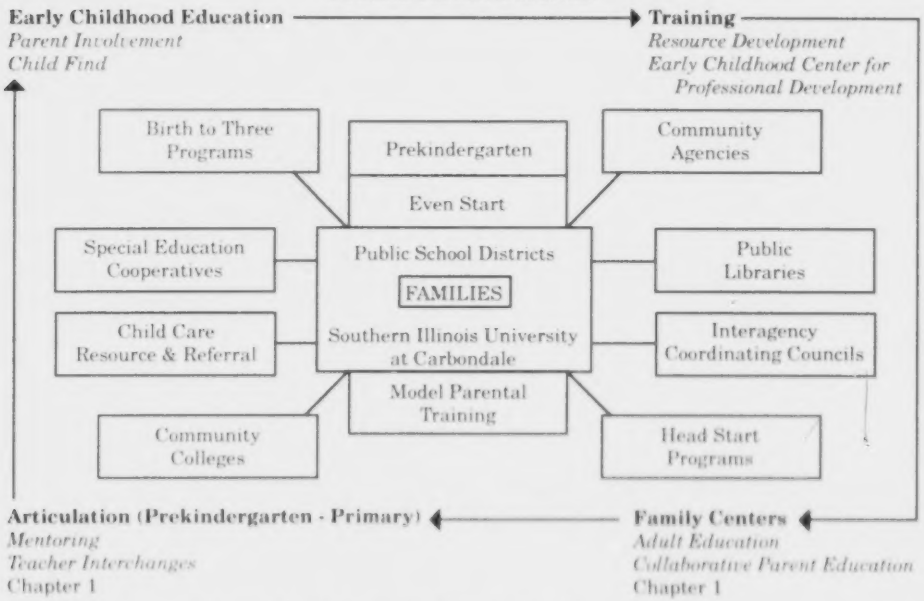
Family literacy programs can also be important components of education reform and job training programs. Finally, they can help families new to this country learn and grow together and become contributing citizens. I am a strong believer in the power of family literacy programs.

—Congressman Bill Goodling

Based on this initial model, all federally funded Even Start programs have three service components: early childhood education, adult education and parenting education. Using an integrated service delivery approach, program components offer parents opportunities to develop basic educational, problem solving, parenting and life skills. Outcomes for parents include increased literacy behaviors, such as shared literacy events with children and increased writing and reading activities in the home; increased parenting behavior and educational skills, such as improved reading ability and higher educational attainment; and increased school involvement. Outcomes for children include increased school readiness, such as age-appropriate cognitive, language and social skills; as well as satisfactory school performance, improved school attendance and lower incidence of remedial placement and grade retention (St. Pierre, Swartz, Murray, Deck & Nickel, 1993).

This chapter details the challenges of developing and delivering a family literacy program that is comprehensive in nature and based on best practices of working with children and families. Initiated approximately five years ago, the Southern Region Even Start (SRES) family literacy program serves three rural Illinois school districts and communities with populations under 12,000. These communities have high rates of unemployment, public aid receipt, adult illiteracy, social isolation and poverty. An administrative model maximizes the accessibility of comprehensive family services and utilizes the expertise of a regional university, two community college districts, an exemplary pre-kindergarten program for children at risk of academic failure, and a consortium of school districts. The program's comprehensive nature and relationship to other participating entities is illustrated on the next page.

SOUTHERN REGION EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS
COLLABORATIVE MODEL



Serving Franklin, Jackson, Perry and Williamson Counties

While the SRES program has successfully met the Even Start Family Literacy goals, the challenges of doing so are reminiscent of similar challenges faced by the pilot in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (1943) when the Little Prince asked him "to . . . draw me a sheep . . ." We were asked to design a family literacy program, not a sheep. Like the pilot, however, we had never done the requested task before and, like the pilot, we called on our resources, our experiences with other programs and took a run at it. Many of our first attempts were rejected because they did not fit the needs of our audience. Just as preconceived notions of "sheepness" did not work for the pilot, nor did preconceived notions of literacy programming work for us.

The pilot and the programmers kept trying. When the pilot accepted the possibility that the Little Prince might know best what qualities his sheep must have to fit into its environment, the task was completed successfully. The pilot drew a box in which the Little Prince's unique vision of a sheep could live. Family literacy planners have the parameters within which family literacy may be designed. We know programs must include opportunities for early childhood education, adult education and parenting education, but within those parameters we must work with individual families to design a unique program that accepts, respects and empowers each family member.

While the challenges of offering an Even Start program are many and varied, several key factors play a critical role in determining program success or failure. These factors include: identifying and recruiting families, engaging and retaining families who are involved in programming, designing educational services for adults and children, providing parent programming to support children's learning, and staffing programs for optimal results.

Angela and Carla: A Family Profile

Four-year-old Angela tugs at her mother's hand as they enter the Family Resource Center. It is already filled with several other parents and children. Angela wants to visit the lending library before her mother's parenting class begins. She nudges her mother toward the toys and books stacked on shelves across the room, anxious to trade last week's story kit (a bag of books and related toys and activities) for a new one. She has her eye on the School Bus kit and talks excitedly about riding the school bus in a few months when she goes to kindergarten. A big toy yellow school bus catches Angela's eye and she takes it down from the shelf. Carla comments to the staff that since starting the program, Angela is writing her name on her drawings and using the writing materials included in the story kits to experiment with letters and numbers. Carla appears proud of her child's accomplishments and indicates her growing confidence in Angela's chances for scholastic success. "I didn't realize how much Angela would enjoy books. She really gets excited about learning. The more time I spend reading with her, the more interested she gets!"

Carla and Angela fill out the lending library card for the School Bus book and toy kit. Angela proudly signs her own name. Then she joins her baby brother and the other children for play in another room, while her mother and the other parents begin the day's parenting workshop.

Staff play a key role in supporting families engaged in family literacy programs. Parents often share information about family circumstances that may be impeding their educational progress. In these cases, the staff help parents identify educational possibilities, while at the same time identifying possible obstacles to their progress. Staff also link parents with community support services that will help them tackle identified barriers. From this perspective, staff are in a position to know the family well.

Carla is currently attending the second of two parenting workshop series. In the first set of reading workshops, she and other parents learned about the importance of reading to young children. They shared information about their own children's reactions to books, learned effective reading techniques and practiced book reading with each other. The parents then chose a free book to take home.

Carla reported that Angela looked forward to each new book. Carla recognized for the first time that learning really does begin at home. Previously, she had believed that Angela would begin learning when she started school. Now, Carla realizes that she can also read appropriate stories to Angela's baby brother. She has newly acquired knowledge of how she can positively influence her children's learning. Carla is more confident that she will be able to continue supporting her children's learning so that neither will drop out of school as she did. She has discovered that by bolstering her own education, she has become more confident in her parenting abilities.

Another series of workshops Carla attended at the Family Resource Center was developed in response to concerns expressed by several parents, including Carla, about coping with the growing independence exhibited by their 4-year-olds. Carla was also concerned about sibling rivalry and how to handle disputes between Angela and the baby. She found information presented by the staff helpful, but benefited most from the opportunity to talk with other parents. She now feels more in control of parenting situations. She intends to keep in contact with the group, even when Angela begins kindergarten.

As a single parent, Carla received support from both the group and the center

staff. She still finds it difficult to provide food, shelter and other basic necessities for herself and her children. Referrals to the Women's Center and the Ministerial Alliance helped her manage. She wants a secure job with an income that would enable her to support her children, but she knows she lacks the skills to find and keep a job. When she enrolled Angela in preschool, she received information about programs that could help her enhance her own education while providing support services, such as child care and transportation reimbursement. She was surprised to find that these services were available to her at the school Angela would attend.

Carla began attending GED classes twice a week, a personal development class and parenting workshops—all held in the school's Family Resource Center during times when Angela was attending pre-kindergarten and the baby was in child care. She plans to attend a transitional course designed to help her gain the skills needed to succeed in community college. Carla plans to enter a two-year vocational program to earn a CNA certificate that will equip her for a position at a local hospital. She comments that her daughter seems very proud of her. Angela tells everyone that she and her mommy attend school together. Carla feels that this is part of the reason Angela has made so much progress. Staff acknowledge with pride that this family considers learning to be a family affair.

Carla and her family are fully involved in the early childhood, adult and parenting education components of the Southern Region Even Start family literacy program. Her family is representative of a growing number of success stories. Five years' experience indicates that families who participate in intense services over a longer period of time are more likely to reach family educational goals. Recent research studies conducted by the Even Start National Evaluation and the National Center for Family Literacy prove the success of family literacy programs that engage and retain families in comprehensive programming (Darling, 1992; Darling & Paull, 1994; St. Pierre et al., 1993).

True to the original intent of the Even Start legislation, SRES continues to develop a range of family educational opportunities tailored to the families it serves. Rather than maintaining a static set of services and activities, the program grows and changes as successful program elements are developed. Family literacy programs must be family-focused and administrators must be able to identify, recruit, engage and retain all eligible family members. Both program and staff flexibility are required to create dynamic family literacy programs that are responsive to diverse family needs. The strategies shared here are the results of the SRES experience over the past five years.

Identifying and Recruiting Families

Two challenges in recruitment are identifying the most needy families and determining which families are ready and willing to participate in the program. A family is deemed eligible for Even Start if at least one parent has a low education level (as determined by the Adult Basic Education Act), has one or more children under the age of 8 and lives within the school district. As families are identified, staff apply an established set of weighted criteria for ranking eligibility, including income, agency referrals, parental education, family status and children receiving special services. Willingness to commit is an important criterion, as well.

Staff conduct an initial needs assessment to determine if the parent is ready to participate in Even Start services. Some families are in crisis situations or have other more immediate needs that cannot be met by the program. In these cases, appropriate referrals are made to community agencies; staff facilitate communica-

tion between a family and the appropriate referral agency. Staff maintain contact with referred families through a newsletter that contains a calendar of events and parenting and resource information. After a month, staff members contact the parent to re-evaluate the family situation and assess the family's readiness to participate; they also encourage parents to contact the center when they are ready to participate.

Engaging and Retaining Families in Programming

The key to recruiting "hard to reach" families lies in enticing them to sample family programming. Strategies include developing a variety of high interest programming options, and allowing families a trial period for participation before requiring them to commit to a full program.

Parents are more likely to participate in services that meet their family's agenda. Staff meet with each parent to explain the program and available services, such as early childhood services, adult education classes, home visits, field trips, library story time, parenting workshops and parent-child activities. The parent is free to choose an area for participation while deciding whether to commit to full participation. Staff meet with the parent either on a home visit or at the Family Resource Center to monitor progress and continued interest in the program. Transportation to the center is arranged as needed and child care services are provided so that parents can more easily take advantage of program activities.

Families join the Even Start program for various reasons: to help their children in school, to strengthen their own skills, to become more effective parents and to find support for raising their children. A challenge for family literacy programs is to retain families by finding ways to fully engage them in all three components of the program. Two strategies have worked especially well in meeting this challenge.

The first strategy, an individual approach to service delivery, involves the parent directly in the process of setting goals and choosing program services. Parents are expected to assume responsibility for identifying family needs and resources, setting individual and family goals, and choosing program activities appropriate to the family situation. Staff meet with parents during a home visit to begin a Family Education Plan. The plan helps parents designate interests, identify resources and set goals. Parents are actively engaged in determining priorities for interests and needs, and then setting short- and long-term family goals. They choose program services that will help all family members reach those goals. While staff members assist parents in determining a realistic plan, the parent maintains the primary responsibility for the degree of family involvement. Once a plan is in place, both parties sign a more formal agreement that outlines individual responsibilities.

The second strategy for retaining families is to designate an appropriate space, and to design and deliver programs that fit family needs and interests. The SRES program has developed a Family Resource Center within each school as a central place to coordinate family programming. School locations are purposefully chosen as a way to strengthen the connection between the home and school.

The Family Resource Center is used for multiple purposes. An informal, less traditional atmosphere is created to attract parents who may not be comfortable in school settings. The Center accommodates both adult and children's programming. The space for adult learners includes room for group instruction, private work space for independent work and individual tutoring, several computer desks and an informal seating arrangement consisting of a sofa and chairs. Another area within the room provides safe play space for children accompanying the parent.

Each center houses a toy and book lending library with resources for both chil-

dren and adults. Materials to support adult, parenting and early childhood education are available in the form of books, articles, story kits and videotapes. The materials accommodate the range of participants' reading levels. Low-ability and new readers may choose books with an accompanying audiotape. Audiotape players are also available for loan. Parenting materials on videotape are available for home use. Adult education videotapes are also available to give adult students an opportunity to work at home.

Educational Services for Adults and Children

The wide range of education levels represented within the Even Start population requires services that can respond to individual needs. Through collaborative efforts with two local community colleges and a tutoring program, both home-based and center-based adult education options are available. Daytime Adult Basic Education and GED classes are taught one to four times a week in the Family Resource Centers. In addition, participants can attend courses on personal development, job skills, life skills and making the transition to college. Volunteer tutors meet with individuals and small groups of lower level students for more individualized instruction. Students who complete the GED receive guidance and support to continue their education.

Even Start staff and literacy volunteers provide the home-based adult education component to parents who do not yet have the skill or confidence to join formal classes. During home visits, staff members work with parents on literacy and math skills to prepare them for entry into a group setting at the Family Resource Center.

Early childhood services are provided in collaboration with several local preschool and parenting programs, including the Southern Region Pre-kindergarten Program, Parents as Teachers (birth to 3) and Head Start programs. Joint activities with these programs include collaborative Child Find activities, joint screenings and referrals, and coordinated home visits. Even Start staff provide educational services once a month during a home visit.

Parent Programming To Support Their Children's Learning

A successful parenting component must meet parents' individual needs and be conducted in a relaxed, informal manner. The goal of the parenting component is to help parents gain skills that will increase their confidence and help them support their children's growth and development. This goal can be met through parent workshops, parent support groups, on-site Center Day family activities, library story time, Make 'n Take workshops and field trips.

Successful parenting programs build on parents' strengths, allow them to share their knowledge with others and teach new skills and techniques for coping with their own family situation. Parent support groups allow parents to share knowledge and hear how others have managed a parenting challenge. New friendships and other social opportunities grow from these sessions, and parents report decreased feelings of isolation and an increased sense of confidence.

Other parent sessions give parents the opportunity to learn new information or a new parenting skill. A variety of methods and materials are used in these parenting sessions, including interactive discussion, videotapes, outside speakers and hands-on activities. These sessions encourage parents to adapt new information to their family's situation and to understand how their efforts are directly linked to their children's growth and development.

The goal of parenting programs is to increase adults' confidence in their ability

to parent. Success is measured by the parents' changed views about their ability to positively foster their child's education development. Parental confidence is increased when parents feel they can maximize the child's learning by participating in activities that are appropriate to the child's developmental needs.

Staffing for Family Literacy Programs

Innovative staff members are key to the success of family literacy programming. A family educator needs expertise and flexibility in order to work directly with parents and children and design creative programming.

Family educators must be able to accept and respect parents' beliefs and lifestyle differences, understand the critical role parents play in their children's education, and be willing to adopt a broader definition of education to work with the entire family. Another essential characteristic is a commitment to finding ways of reaching families that will create opportunities for success.

The family educator's responsibilities include: guiding parents in setting goals, giving parents information about program component options, supporting parents in finding and getting access to needed support services, providing parents emotional and professional support while gaining skills and developing confidence in their own abilities, and serving as a link to community resources and agency services. Consequently, staff must be competent in many areas and involved in an ongoing staff development process.

Ensuring that staff have support and a forum for problem-solving is also essential. The SRES program involves staff in a team approach for program and staff development. All staff meet once a month and share what works and what does not. Such program sharing encourages staff to share their expertise with colleagues, and engages each person in a team problem-solving process. When difficulties arise, staff members can rely on others to help search for solutions, minimizing feelings of isolation and frustration.

The staff development model should mirror the process implemented with the families. It has been successful in developing staff who are willing to struggle with program obstacles until solutions can be found. Ultimately, staff involved in this process feel proud of their involvement in a dynamic family literacy experience.

Summary

The Even Start Family Literacy Programs Statute challenges us to develop comprehensive family literacy programs. How to establish and operate individual Even Start programs depends upon the unique families that will be served by the programs. The pilot in *The Little Prince* accepted the challenge to draw a box in which the Little Prince's unique vision of sheep could live. The box is drawn for Even Start programs, but how the box is packed depends upon the unique characteristics of individual participants. The SRES family literacy program accepted the challenge.

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The Critical Role of the Child in Storybook Reading

Ann M. Mowery

Social interaction between adults and children is an important key to children's language acquisition (Menyuk, 1991). This interaction is vital in other aspects of literacy acquisition, as well. Certainly one of the most familiar parent-child interactions occurs during storybook reading. The literature identifies numerous benefits of parents' reading aloud to their young children: increased language use, vocabulary development, improved listening comprehension, knowledge of print conventions and a link to school achievement (Chomsky, 1972; Clay, 1979, 1985; Peterman, 1988; Teale, 1986; Wells, 1986).

Administrators in one of the primary (K-3) schools in my district became interested in offering parents guided help sessions in storybook reading strategies. This interest originated from two sources: PTA discussions, where a number of parents expressed interest in attending parent education seminars on supporting their children's learning, and kindergarten teachers, who expressed concern about the decreasing level of print awareness among their incoming students. They believed this decrease was due to societal changes that undermined many familiar family routines, including reading to children, that traditionally supported preschool learning in the home.

Because this proposal was viewed as a training program, the school contacted me in my role as staff development administrator for the district. This project interested me, as I was engaged in doctoral research studies that focused on emergent literacy and, in particular, storybook reading interactions. I believed that the insights I had gained from a case study of the storybook interactions between toddlers and parents would be an invaluable resource for designing a parent education program.

Observing the Storybook Reading Behaviors Within a Family in Our Community

Research literature contains many descriptions and analyses of child-adult interactions during storybook reading episodes. In fact, this issue has received more research attention than any other aspect of a young child's literacy experiences (Sulzby & Teale, 1991; Yaden, Smolkin MacGillivray, 1993). Qualitative research studies do not make generalizations, but rather describe behaviors and interactions within particular contexts. Consequently, one of the leading researchers in the field of emergent literacy, William Teale, has consistently called for additional studies of family literacy activities to provide a greater understanding of children's preschool experiences. In recognition of this need, I began examining the storybook reading behaviors of a family within my own district.

I was fortunate enough to locate a working class family willing to participate in the study. This choice had two decided benefits: surprisingly little research focused on storybook reading within working class families, and a majority of the

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families (64 percent) in our school district are from the working class. Any information I collected would be helpful in planning a parent education program that would be relevant to our community.

The family I studied included Mike, Jenny and their 18-month-old son Joseph. Mike, in his early 30s, was a high school graduate who worked in the construction industry. Jenny, in her mid-20s, had attended college, but had not sought employment outside of the home. Both Jenny and Mike took their parenting responsibilities very seriously. Storybook reading was a very familiar ritual in their home.

The study lasted 18 months and included 33 reading sessions. I recorded bimonthly videotapes of storybook reading sessions. My observations were limited to pre-bedtime sessions, although Jenny reported that Joseph wanted to be read to three or four times a day and that she was almost always able to comply. The observation and recording sessions with the family ran from half an hour to an hour; most of the actual tapings lasted approximately 20 minutes. Of course, I also used field notes and informal interviews with the parents after each session. At the end of the study, the parents viewed the videotapes to gain insights on the interactions that had occurred during the storybook reading sessions.

Confirmation of the Research Findings

By and large, research emphasizes the parent as the lead player and teacher, and I clearly expected to observe Mike and Jenny in that position of dominance. Analyses of storybook reading interactions between Joseph and his parents clearly supported the classic findings. Because the main staple of Joseph's library were picture books and simple storybooks, naming items and actions seemed to be a very comfortable and enjoyable routine. Mike and Jenny both routinely initiated the query, response and reinforcement labeling dialogue described by Ninio and Bruner (1978). They were extremely adept at making the "text to life" connections that Marilyn Cochran-Smith (1984) described, in which the adult makes connections between the text and real situations in the child's own life and environment. Such connections were noted in virtually all of the sessions. As the months progressed, rhyming and predictable books became a favorite and a new dialogic interaction emerged that was reminiscent of Cazden's (1983) "Fill in the Blank" game, in which the adult and child take turns producing the text.

The Role of the Child Comes into Focus

Although I was easily able to verify the literature concerning the adult's role in storybook reading, I quickly became aware that the storybook reading process is a very dynamic interaction in which the child plays a much more critical role than previously stressed. As I reviewed the videotapes, Joseph's role intrigued me. My study provided considerable support for the observation that:

> *. . . although the parents' role in providing the initial scaffold upon which emergent literacy is supported has been identified as an important element of storybook reading, it may be that the child's own contribution to the process via frequent questions and comments is a more useful index of the child's acquisition of literacy knowledge. (Yaden, Smolkin & Conlon, 1989, p. 191)*

Recognizing that the storybook reading event is a social interaction, a dialogic exchange, researchers have used the word "negotiation" to describe the parent-child

interactions (Harkness & Miller, 1982; Heath, with Thomas, 1984; Morrow, 1988; Teale & Sulzby, 1987).

Negotiation implies input from both parties and a result that is mutually agreeable. It was my observation that "negotiation" quite appropriately described the dynamic interplay between Mike or Jenny and Joseph. Right from the start, I noted the verbal and nonverbal negotiation "bids" that Joseph made in order to influence the course of the reading sessions. It was also clear through the course of the sessions, and in subsequent conversations with Mike and Jenny, that Joseph strongly influenced their decisions, utterances and actions. Rogoff, Malkin and Gilbride (1984) state that:

> *During communication in the zone of proximal development the adult assesses the child's current understanding of the material and adjusts the scaffolding to support the child's developing skills. The child similarly adjusts the pace of instruction according to his or her needs and guides the adult in constructing the scaffold. Both adult and child are actively involved. (p. 33)*

According to Wertsch (1984), each participant's utterances or bids for negotiation are instrumental in shifting the child's level of understanding toward that of the adult.

Negotiation between the partners sometimes is initiated at book selection. In the case of the family I studied, Joseph was almost always allowed to choose the book for story time. His persistent negotiation usually swayed the parent toward his choice. Such unwavering determination was obvious during a session when Joseph was 20 months old. Mike wanted to read a new book that they had not shared before, but Joseph was steadfast in his determination to read an old favorite, the fireman book. Several times Mike tried to persuade Joseph that the new book was going to be interesting and even opened it up and began to read it. Joseph pushed the book aside and climbed off his father's lap to find the fireman book. When reviewing that particular session, Mike recognized Joseph's dominance:

> *He (Joseph) had the upper hand that night. He wanted to read what he wanted to read. He was just not interested in that other book. I was frustrated, but I knew I couldn't make him read it. I tried to sway him with interest, but that didn't work.*

I never witnessed Joseph's parents insisting that a particular book be read when their son was resistant.

Sometimes an adult will attempt to steer the reading session in a particular direction, but the child simply will not follow suit. More often than not, the parent will choose not to persist. One evening in Joseph's 21st month, he and his father were reading the picture dictionary. They took turns labeling the items. At one point, Mike pointed to the letter "T" at the top of the page and said, "Here's the letter T. Can you say 'T'?" Joseph ignored the request and did not transfer his gaze to the top of the page. Instead, he pointed to a picture of a teddy bear and asked, "What's that?" Before Mike could respond, Joseph labeled the picture himself, saying, "Bear . . . Boomer Bear." Mike positively reinforced Joseph's label and once more attempted to transfer the child's attention back to the letter, but again Joseph interrupted with another query and Mike gave up his attempt to direct

Joseph's attention.

In this episode, Mike wanted to pursue letter identification, but Joseph was simply not interested. Joseph was able to distract his dad from his mission by posing some questions and interjecting Cazden's (1983) "What's this?" game format. Mike made one additional attempt to introduce letter identification, but when the child did not follow his father's lead Mike abandoned his agenda. Joseph's "What's this?" questions may have been legitimate requests for information, but the fact that he answered his own question about the bear would suggest it was a diversionary tactic.

Mike viewed this segment and reinforced my sense that he was somewhat aware of his son's strategy, as indicated by his comments:

> *There were a lot of new things that he didn't know, but he said Boomer because he saw a picture of a teddy bear and associated it with the one he had. It was important to know what he was interested in.*

Joseph's refusal to respond was evidence to his father that he did not have mastery of what was requested. Joseph seemed to employ the distraction strategy on many occasions.

In discussions with Mike and Jenny immediately following a recording or when reviewing the videotapes, they gave further evidence of the importance they placed on Joseph's active participation in the reading. Jenny said, "You just can't teach. He has to participate." Mike thoroughly agreed, "Sometimes he listens to things that you point out and sometimes he picks out things that interest him . . . if it's something that interests him, he'll let me know and we go." This couple certainly acknowledged their role as teachers, but they also recognized that their child provided a sense of direction for the reading event. When Mike referred to the first time that Joseph listened to an entire story, he said, "This was the first time he allowed me to read a whole story." By choosing the word "allowed," Mike indicated his belief that Joseph played a decisive role in the reading event.

According to DeLoache (1984), picture book reading is a joint cognitive endeavor of getting and maintaining the child's interest. Jenny and Mike reflected a keen concern for Joseph's interest level. Time and again in the course of our conversations, they mentioned the need to keep their son's level of interest high during the reading session. Keeping Joseph interested was obviously a priority for his parents, indicated by their leaving book selections to the child and abandoning their own agendas in favor of his preferences.

Assessing Joseph's knowledge base in vocabulary and concepts also seemed particularly important to his parents. They were proud of his quest for information, as evidenced by Mike's description of Joseph's involvement in the reading sessions: "He was trying very hard to learn something." In order to facilitate that process, both Jenny and Mike were constantly probing for indications of his knowledge so that they "could build on it." Joseph's parents gauged his interest and knowledge level by encouraging his input. In fact, they depended upon it and appeared to be consciously aware of the major role Joseph played in their interactions with him. I was amazed by the number of times that Jenny or Mike would pause a video segment and comment that "He's taking the lead here" or "I'm following his lead." They explained that they needed to know what he understood and/or found interesting so that they could "build on it."

These two parents, neither of whom had a background in literacy or child devel-

opment, understood that they needed to look to their young son for guidance in order to ensure an enjoyable and productive storybook reading experience. A review of the data from the 18-month study indicated a need to modify the traditional concept of the adult providing the scaffolding for the child. Joseph's interactions and negotiations with Mike and Jenny showed that the child is far more than simply an active participant in the reading sessions. The degree of direction he provided in the reading sessions convinced me that children must be considered co-constructors of the scaffold.

The results of any case study must be considered from within its context. I make no claim that this is the "typical working class home." In fact, this study nicely illustrates Teale's conclusion that a wide variability of storybook reading practices exists within social groups. This couple's literacy endeavors with their son should be viewed as one more piece of the family life mosaic called for by Teale (Teale & Sulzby, 1987). I was convinced, however, that other parents would benefit from the insights about literacy support I gained from studying Jenny and Mike's intuitive work with Joseph.

Incorporating the Role of the Child into the Storybook Reading Parent Education Program

The primary school team (consisting of classroom teachers, a reading resource teacher, a Gifted and Talented teacher, the principal and myself) who developed our pilot parent education program selected Patricia Edwards' "Parents As Partners in Reading" (1990) program as a framework for our curriculum. After thorough review of the program and selection of six modules, we decided that our modified program must incorporate the concept of parents as researchers—parents who observe and take cues from their child's verbal and nonverbal interactions. The child's significant role and contribution to the reading session should be recognized.

The resulting program promoted the child's active role of teaching effective interaction strategies to adults. During the first session, instructors pointed out that parental behavior should mirror that used with a young child acquiring speech. In other words, the child should be considered a conversational partner. Instructors taught questioning techniques that were relevant to the genre being highlighted in each session. For example, as picture books were introduced, sample "labeling" dialogues were modeled. Later, examination of predictable and rhyming books evoked discussion of the need to pause and encourage the child to "fill in the blank." Parents also learned to elicit predictions and relate stories to their child's own personal experiences.

Another session, "The Parent As a Kid Watcher," emphasized the critical importance of dialogic interaction between adult and child. During this session, the instructors reminded the participants that "The most important thing that occurs in your reading session is the interaction between you and your child. It is in that interaction and the discussion that you have with your child about the picture that learning takes place for him or her. We need to remember that reading with a child should be a real partnership. Of course, the parent bears a lot of responsibility, but the wise parent watches and listens to the child. Responding to your child's interests and pacing needs will go a long way toward ensuring that the reading session is enjoyable for both."

We showed video clips of Joseph's reading sessions that highlighted Mike and Jenny's willingness to let Joseph select the reading and adjust the session to his interest. Participants went home not only with a book to read, but also with hand-

outs on effective interaction techniques. The adults were reassured throughout the sessions that a collaborative partnership with the child during the reading sessions would be productive. Information gained in such a collaborative partnership would help the adults make decisions during the reading session that would increase the child's level of interest and participation. The major goal should always be providing an enjoyable experience for each participant and increasing learning opportunities for the child.

Thirteen mothers participated in our weekly "Family Partners in Reading" program, which consisted of six hour-and-a-half sessions. While all sessions promoted the active role of the child and ways to ensure it, the fifth session particularly stressed the parent as a researcher/"kid watcher." Session formats included demonstration and modeling, video clips, discussion, participant practice, instructor feedback and opportunities to check out quality children's literature.

The women ranged in age from the mid-20s to the late 40s. One of the mothers was African American and two others were fairly recent immigrants to the United States, one from China and the other from West Africa. These latter two were still facing their own language problems. Another mother, who was raised in Italy, was bilingual.

In order to gain data that would help us judge the effectiveness of "Family Partners in Reading," the participants were interviewed before and after completion of the program. Participants also completed feedback sheets at the end of every session. Three mothers were videotaped reading to their children before participation in "Family Partners in Reading," halfway through the program and about four to six weeks after completing the program.

The initial interviews revealed that most of the women were drawn to the program because they wanted to help their children become readers. The two recent immigrants saw the program as an opportunity to learn more about the English language. One mother readily admitted that the program gave her an opportunity to interact with other adults while enjoying free child care. Most of these mothers (and one grandmother raising a granddaughter) read to their children at bedtime. Many mentioned feeling frustrated by lack of time and lack of patience with children's interruptions of reading.

The Outcome of the Program: Visible Growth in the Child's Role

The mothers' enthusiasm, evident in discussions, provided us with ample proof that they valued the opportunity to learn about effective reading strategies and profited both cognitively and behaviorally. They made many remarks such as, "I just never dreamed that reading at home was so important. We'll do it every day now." Furthermore, the mothers began to recognize the importance of dialogic interaction during reading sessions.

For the purposes of our field test, the ultimate goal for "Family Partners in Reading" was improved interactions between parent and child. Of course, the comments made by the participants during and after the program gave us indications that changes might be occurring, but the videotapes of reading behavior before, during and after program participation provided us with concrete evidence of change. In all three videotaped cases, the mothers showed identical behavior patterns before the program's initiation: there was no interactive dialogue between adult and child and no attempt to engage the child in conversation or to diagnose interest or understanding. Reading was not considered a joint venture, but rather one entailing an active adult role and a passive child role.

Subsequent videos documented a definite growth in the reading behaviors of these mothers. Substantial improvement emerged as children became engaged in the selection of books, both mother and child held the books, the parents asked questions, and children initiated questions or drew the mother's attention to other stories or other sections of the book.

I witnessed a metamorphosis from adult-directed, child-passive reading to an environment where parent and child acted as partners in a joint reading venture. This change in parental reading behavior stimulated the children and promoted development of interest and language. The mothers accomplished this feat by collaboratively working with their children. By listening to their children's comments, questions and responses, they were able to assist their offspring through appropriate scaffolding.

Interviews with the program participants after completion of "Family Partners in Reading" further validated the program's effectiveness. We received input such as, "This program has brought our family together. It has made a real difference. Even our 14-year-old is reading with us. It feels so good," "The kids are more excited about reading," and "Now I read every day. I'm patient with her now. She loves it and is a different child." We found one mother's comments, however, to be particularly rewarding because they reflected the kind of understanding that "Family Partners in Reading" was designed to generate:

> *These last few weeks for me, it's just a personal thing—trying to make reading more their agenda. I always think I'm doing that, but it always seems so frustrating. You want to read it. It gets to be more than just reading the book and coming to terms with that—for me that was very helpful. Seeing that, OK, they can be in charge, not with getting drinks of water and doing that, but that the story will maybe be better or liked better if they can say, "What's this?" or "I saw this . . . " and not be so impatient with the situation and just make it an adult agenda. I don't think you ever intend or I don't intend to start out like that, but sometimes it's like, "I really should get on with this story." I just think that as the weeks have gone on, it keeps constantly coming back to you to really try. You know we've read forever and ever —the reading has got to be better—more of their purpose. It's been very helpful.*

A number of excellent family literacy programs designed to support storybook reading are available, but their major emphasis tends to be on the adult's role as the "lead player." I believe we need to place more emphasis on the importance of the dialogic interaction between adult and child during storybook reading. Today, with new insights into the learning process, researchers are promoting a shift in the role of the classroom teacher from "sage" to "guide." A similar shift must be promoted in parent education programs. Mike and Jenny's wonderful example provided me with the view of the adult as a facilitator of learning, drawing and building on the child's input in order to support his/her learning efforts. Because the adult is not solely responsible for providing direction, but is dependent on the child's input, the child must be considered a co-constructor of the scaffold. By emphasizing the role of the parent as the researcher/"kid watcher," I believe that "Family Partners in Reading" has made a significant improvement to parent education programs supporting young children's literacy development.

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Family Literacy: Enhancing Adolescent Mothers' Guided Participation in Storybook Reading

Donna Celano and Susan B. Neuman

Sakema, an adolescent mother, and her 4-year-old son, Kalief, are sitting quietly together in the Cozy Corner Library area of the child care center. Together, they are finishing the book *Harry the Dirty Dog*.

Sakema: And they got all washed up.
Kalief: Yup, that's what they're doing. I like that book. *(Turns back to the front of the book and looks at the picture of Harry.)* Is this a puppy?
Sakema: It's Harry *(turning the page)*. You see this is Harry when he's dirty and this is Harry when he's clean. They're the same dog. See how he poured water on him right here?
Kalief: Yup. Read it again, read it again. I like this.

With these simple interactional exchanges of reading and responding, Sakema is laying the groundwork for her child's future reading skills. She is adjusting her responses to her child's interests and queries, tacitly guiding his development and understanding of the story. She structures the situation so that Kalief can feel a measure of success. And it is through this collaborative process that parents and caregivers can effectively transmit their beliefs and values about literacy.

This transactive process distinguishes family literacy from other service delivery models. Family literacy focuses on enhancing the literacy practices of the parent, recognizing that the parents, in turn, will be more likely to positively influence their children's literacy learning. Consequently, these programs focus not only on the parent or the child, but also on the parent-child relationship.

Applying this process to families from diverse economic, educational and cultural backgrounds presents a primary challenge to family literacy researchers and practitioners. Some researchers argue that existing family literacy programs are school-based, designed to reflect mainstream culture and have not traditionally been sensitive to multiple literacies from cultural perspectives (Auerbach, 1989; Taylor, 1993).

Through our "Families Reading Together" program, however, we have learned that literacy need not be taught in such a school-based approach. To focus on helping parents interact with their children, we developed a conceptual framework based on these families' everyday routine involvement in their cultural communities—

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involvement not typically captured in interaction models based on didactic school lessons. Our goal was to enhance a sharing of focus and purpose between adolescent mothers and their children in the process of communicating through language.

The critical need to develop specialized services for adolescent mothers and their children provided the rationale for developing our specific family literacy program. What looked like small steps at first actually became a giant leap toward enhancing literacy learning for parents and their children.

Background

The most current data available estimates that one in 10 teenage girls in the United States will become pregnant every year (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1986). Studies suggest that these teens and their children travel a hard road. Some government statistics, for example, indicate that adolescent parents often face reduced scholastic achievement, marginal income-earning capacity and greater welfare dependency (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 1986; Berlin & Sum, 1988). Their children also encounter tremendous obstacles. Many have limited language and problem-solving abilities, as well as significantly lower IQ scores (Anastasiow, 1982; Furstenberg, Brooks-Gunn & Morgan, 1987; Reis & Herz, 1987). These children are less likely to experience the type of engaging activities that better prepare their more advantaged peers for school. Not only are they less likely to attend preschool, but their home life is most likely to be a "non-talking" environment where adults fail to stimulate language and literacy development.

Despite the tremendous odds they face, adolescent mothers universally want to be good parents (Furstenberg et al., 1987; Neuman & Gallagher, in press). Poverty, poor education and low self-esteem, however, often work against their best efforts. Understanding their strong desire to be a role model to their children (Neuman, Hagedorn, Celano & Daly, 1994), we designed our program to engage these mothers in improving their literacy skills in order to effectively respond to their children's learning needs.

Our program involved adolescent mothers in daily language and literacy interactions with their children. We were particularly interested in Rogoff's concept of guided participation (Rogoff, 1990). This concept recognizes how parents tacitly guide their children in the course of daily interactions (e.g., doing chores, making dinner), helping them to effectively participate with an adult in routine events. Active involvement in such activities allows children to develop an understanding that may carry to future occasions and new situations (Rogoff, Mosier, Mistry & Goncu, 1993). Ultimately, parents guide their children's participation by structuring situations to encourage children's active participation and by building bridges of understanding from what children currently know to what they can imagine.

A Family Literacy Program for Adolescent Mothers and Children

Our program served adolescent parents who attended a school district-sponsored Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED) program in an urban metropolitan area. The school served over 200 mothers who had dropped out of school as a result of childbearing, poor academic achievement and/or economic deprivation. The program allowed the mothers to attend literacy classes while their children were cared for in a child care center two blocks from the school. The overwhelming majority (95 percent) of the mothers were African American; their average age was 19. The mothers received 2 1/2 hours of literacy instruction three days a week, followed by a parent education class. A social worker occasion-

ally visited their homes. Prior to our intervention, virtually no interaction existed between parents and children during the day.

Working with the school's staff, we integrated the adult literacy and parent education activities. This integration required some structural changes. First, we redesigned the child care center by creating several literacy-related play centers (Neuman & Roskos, 1992, 1993) filled with environmental print, authentic literacy objects and storybooks. One area became a home kitchen, another a grocery store. We designed a "Cozy Corner Library," with low-lying bookcases that toddlers could reach and use.

Next, we combined the literacy and parent education component of the curriculum, allowing for mothers' regular participation in the child care center. Each mother spent one hour a day in the child care center for 12 sessions. Mothers were mentored by staff to participate in the center's educational activities, read to the children and play with them.

Once they became familiar with the center and its daily routines, we guided parents through a four-part process designed to enhance their participation with their children. Based on the model of guided participation, we developed the following metaphorical phrases to describe important aspects of the process:

★ **Get Set:** This phrase refers to the mother's efforts to recruit the child's attention (through nonverbal, verbal and environmental cues) in order to focus and maintain the child's attention and goal orientation. Behaviors to enhance "getting set" may include encouraging a child to focus on a particular topic, or telling the child that it is time to do an activity.

★ **Give Meaning:** Mothers "give meaning" by sharing the value of an interaction. They also explain how this information can relate to situations that may occur in the future. A mother gives meaning by labeling objects, elaborating on actions or objects and providing information that might help the child better understand.

★ **Build Bridges:** Once the child understands the meaning and context of an activity, the mother then tries to extend this understanding. She connects the activity to something that is relevant to the child's experiences. The mother "builds bridges" by linking a present activity to other experiences, as well as by explaining cause-and-effect relations.

★ **Step Back:** As a final step, the mother "steps back" and allows the child to become the prime problem-solver. This means helping the child understand a principle so that he or she can take control of the task. Parents should also encourage turn-taking and provide feedback to induce strategic thinking.

We involved each mother in a three-part "reflection cycle," designed to illustrate how this process works. First, we discussed with each mother a particular aspect of the process. For example, we would talk casually about how a mother might get her child ready for an activity. With a storybook reading activity, we might emphasize the importance of securing the child's interest, letting the child touch the book and sitting close together. We would try to connect these experiences with those in the home or community by discussing how storybook reading might enter into the family's daily routines.

In the second part of the reflection cycle, we encouraged mothers to go into the center and take part in the educational activities, once a week for 12 weeks. The mothers read to children, led them in a goal-directed activity and played creatively

with them. We arranged for the mothers to work with small groups of children, their own as well as two or three other toddlers. All sessions were videotaped.

In the third part of the reflection cycle, the mothers viewed the videotapes with us. During this time, the mothers reflected on their interactions with the children—what they liked, what they might do differently and what the children seemed to enjoy most. One mother said, for example, "You know, I kind of think I rushed through reading that book. It's kind of easy for me to understand, but I think Edward missed it." As part of their literacy classes, adolescent mothers would then return from the center and write about their experiences in journals. They described things they did well and some things they wanted to improve. Along with their teacher, we would provide feedback and suggest ways to connect center activities to their home activities.

Our Findings

Detailed codings of mothers' interactions with children indicated an important phenomenon that we had hoped might occur as a result of their involvement in the center (see Neuman & Daly, 1993, for details). As mothers became increasingly capable of guiding their children's participation, they began to adjust their level of involvement and support to meet the children's needs and competence levels. In the beginning sessions, for example, most of the mothers' comments to the children were quite directive, almost authoritarian.

Ramona, an adolescent mother, is reading a book about trucks to Benjamin:

Ramona: Who gets in the front of the truck?
Benjamin: A man.
Ramona: The man gets in the front of the truck. OK. These are horns. Say horns.
Benjamin: Horns.
Ramona: That's right. OK. What's this?
Benjamin: What?
Ramona: This. This right here. This is a bell, say bell.
Benjamin: Bell.
Ramona: Yip. Very good.

In these initial sessions, Ramona seemed to act as an inquisitor as she directed Benjamin through the story. And Benjamin assumed the role of responder, answering questions and following directions. While it may be somewhat beneficial, this type of session often left little opportunity for Benjamin to initiate ideas, ask questions or comment on a picture or an aspect of the story.

Over time, however, the mothers' exchanges increasingly reflected greater "bridge building." In these later sessions, we found the children taking the lead and assuming more responsibility. As a result, the storybook reading sessions became more lively and interactive. In these sessions, the roles of parent and child seemed to reverse from the earlier exchanges. Here, the mother took on the role of responder to her child's questions and initiations:

Benjamin: Read me this book.
Ramona: Read this one? *(Gets book and opens it.)* This is the rhinoceros, see?

Benjamin: Where's he at?
Ramona: Here, see? See someone's brushing his teeth in the morning.
Benjamin: I brush my teeth by myself.
Ramona: You brush your teeth by yourself. Maybe you should show him how to brush his teeth. But he's got someone to do it for him. He's got a good thing!
Benjamin: *(Turns the page.)* What's the porcupine doing?

In this example, one can observe how Ramona builds bridges from the perceptual to the conceptual. In this active interchange, she helps Benjamin extend his comment by suggesting a future scenario. She also draws parallels between something familiar to something less known. In doing so, Ramona is helping her son build the cognitive bridges that are so critical for literacy and learning.

What is not apparent throughout these examples is that Ramona's literacy level at the time was not high (i.e., a grade equivalent score of 4.0 on the Test of Adult Basic Education). This is a particularly important point because many parents with whom we have worked were reluctant to read to their children, believing they lacked the skills necessary for enjoyable interactions. Since the processes of guided participation encouraged the conveying of meaning to children, however, it was not necessary for Ramona to read every sentence from the book, or even to complete the story from start to finish. Instead, we emphasized using stories as playful opportunities to interact meaningfully with children. Ramona wrote in her journal:

> *Today was very interesting. I played with 4 kids—Benjamin, Kalief, Edward and Delores—and I read to them and they were very interested in the book, and they asked many questions, and they had many answers also. They are really good children and very smart.*

Children's Responses

Our analysis also showed that changes in mothers' exchanges corresponded with changes in children's interactions with books. Before our program, very few of the children were read to, either at home or in the child care center. Most of the parents and child care staff thought toddlers and preschoolers were not "ready" to listen to stories. As this example illustrates, parents did not believe they could hold children's attention when reading a story:

Deria, an adolescent mother, is reading to her daughter, Fatima.
Deria: That's a duck.
Fatima: No, a bear.
Deria: No, that ain't a bear. This is the bear. What is it?
Fatima: I don't know.
Deria: What's this? It's splashing in the water.
Fatima: *(Grabs the book and runs away.)*

In the early sessions, mothers tended to control the story reading by setting the pace and defining the agenda. In the example above, Deria is clearly setting the goals, with little response and initiative from Fatima. In fact, as Deria might have predicted, Fatima lost interest in the story rather quickly.

Later, however, as mothers became more responsive to the child's initiatives, we began to note important changes in children's interactions around books:

Fatima: Why's he crying?
Deria: Cause he thinks he lost his friend.
Fatima: He thinks he lost his doggie. Where's his doggie at?
Deria: It's somewhere back here (*turns the page*). There he is.
Fatima: Where's the other dog at?
Deria: He only has one dog.
Fatima: Where's the other dad's dog at?
Deria: I don't know. There's only one dad and one dog in the story.

In this example, Fatima is clearly taking charge, asking questions and pacing the reading. As a result, her attentiveness and interest in a story increased. When an adult carefully guides the child's participation, we found that even toddlers began to take greater control of the storybook reading sessions. They also begin to set specific purposes for reading, pushing their own development toward new and creative directions. With this approach, mothers establish a rich foundation for children to assume increased involvement and responsibility for their own learning through storybook reading.

Implications

Our family literacy program is based on several important principles that have special relevance to teachers and schools. First, it is rooted in the belief that the central focus of family literacy should be parents' and children's transactions, whereby parents transfer their newly developing skills to the child. In this respect, our model of guided participation, which displays cultural variations yet shares important universal characteristics across cultures, is a catalyst for helping parents learn about the processes of conveying meaning to young children. Although we have focused specifically in this chapter on storybook reading, the same processes have also been shown to apply to other routine learning events, like playing and grocery shopping. We believe we can help parents by unlocking these processes, and by guiding their participation with children through coaching and social support.

Second, this project is based on the premise that adolescent parents' strong desire to help their children will encourage them to improve their own literacy skills. We must remember, however, that they face tremendous obstacles. Our family literacy program has attempted to break down these barriers, encouraging parents to become valuable teachers by increasing their own literacy skills and knowledge, as well as teaching them to respond to their children's learning needs.

And finally, we believe that programs focusing on the difficulties of teen pregnancy, which sometimes subconsciously demean these mothers for their life choices, are not successful in overcoming the intergenerational cycle of low-achieving families and children. Rather, we believe it is essential to build programs that are guided by mutual respect between parents and professionals. Such programs will help parents develop the confidence and skills needed to assume their roles as their child's first literacy teachers.

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Baby TALK: Language, Literature and Love for Infants

Claudia Quigg and Jan Mandernach

Prenatal clinics, well child clinics and hospital obstetric units in Decatur, Illinois, are building a "cradle" of literacy through a community collaboration known as Baby TALK (Teaching Activities for Learning and Knowledge). When they speak of literacy, many people think of the ability to use written language. Written language, however, is the most refined form of communication that is only attained after lower forms of communication have become facile. The evolution of communication begins with nonverbal or "body language" and then proceeds through oral language development before mastery of written language is possible.

And because communication happens among human beings, it must grow out of relationships (Brazelton, 1992; Brazelton & Cramer, 1990; Magid & McKelvey, 1987). Therefore, the earliest relationship, the attachment between parent and child, is in reality the "cradle" from which the child's eventual communication skills and style will develop.

In 1986, concern about children brought together professionals from Decatur's schools, libraries, hospitals, health department and volunteer literacy program. Sharing a belief in the power of positive relationships, these agencies committed themselves to a collaboration and Baby TALK was created. With a basic goal of encouraging parental nurturing of very young children, Baby TALK has combined resources and opportunities to reach more than 14,000 families in Decatur with the message that "Language, Literature and Love" can provide a pretty wonderful start for a child's life.

Where To Begin?

Driven by a desire to provide parents with tools to develop their relationships with their infants, Baby TALK coordinators set about determining how to reach parents and children. A survey of other parent-infant programs in the United States pointed to service delivery as the key to success (Baby TALK, 1986). Many outstanding programs reported that despite the presence of beautiful facilities, insightful curriculum and engaging staff, they continued to reach only middle-income, well-educated parents. Consequently, Baby TALK planners asked the two questions that have driven service delivery ever since: "Where are the parents and children we want to serve?" and "How can we serve them there?"

Virtually all of the 2,100 babies born each year in Decatur are born in one of two places: Decatur Memorial Hospital or St. Mary's Hospital. We chose the obstetric units at these two hospitals as a good starting point for Baby TALK. Because the obstetric staff from these hospitals were part of the original collaborative group, Baby TALK personnel easily gained access to the obstetric units.

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Since new parents are enthralled with their babies and eager for whatever information they can get about them, we arrange for a Baby TALK teacher to visit them while they are still in the hospital. Parents are eager to learn about their newborn's abilities and what to expect in the months to come. Even at-risk parents display this same enthusiasm. Baby TALK personnel offer information about the challenges ahead, such as colic and sleepless nights, and encourage the parents to see these as developmental, short-term and survivable challenges.

Anticipatory Guidance

An important guiding principle for the Baby TALK program is providing *anticipatory guidance* for parents. Most challenges parents face are entirely predictable in nature, typical of the child's stage of development (Brazelton 1992; Schmitt, 1992). In his book *Touchpoints*, T. Berry Brazelton provides a clear road map to the challenges commonly experienced by young families. If parents know what lies just ahead and understand why it is likely to occur, they are more likely to view a developmental challenge as a sign of a normally developing child, rather than as a negative idiosyncrasy of an individual child. With such understanding, parents are less frustrated and tense. Then, when the challenge passes, parents can share in the child's relief and both parties can feel satisfaction at having made it through a difficult passage.

Parents also need concrete tools to help them build a relationship with their child (Brazelton, 1992). While in the hospital obstetric units, parents receive a copy of Baby TALK's parent manual, *Babies & Books: A Joyous Beginning* (Quigg & Gross, 1994), and a cardboard book to begin their baby's home library. Other examples of fine children's books appropriate for use with little ones are shared. Parents are invited to bring their baby to the public library, where children's librarians take a photograph of each baby's first visit and give families a "red carpet tour" of the children's section.

A simple telephone call from a caring and informed individual is often enough to ease a parent through the stressful times. Studies show that even limited counseling over the telephone can alleviate stressors to a parent-child relationship (Wolke, Gray & Meyer, 1994). Approximately two weeks after a baby's birth, parents receive their first call on the Baby TALK Warmline from a Baby TALK staff member or a representative from one of several collaborative agencies. The caller asks the parents how things are going and offers to send them a handout about 3-week-old babies or information on any other topic. Referrals for services are often made to other agencies. If a family is experiencing significant stress, a home visit will be made. The Warmline professional follows up a week later to ask if the material arrived and if the situation has improved. Parents are invited to call the Warmline anytime they want to talk, and every family has a refrigerator magnet printed with the Warmline number.

The interagency collaboration that makes this Warmline possible enriches the program in many ways. When the Housing Authority colleague works her shift, she follows up on Baby TALK parents who live in the housing project and checks on the housing needs of other families. When the adult literacy coordinator comes to work her shift, she also calls parents who did not finish high school and invites them to work towards their GED.

Every two to three months, parents receive a letter outlining the developmental stage their child is entering. These letters describe the challenges of that age and explain why they are happening. They also remind parents of the unique joys

and opportunities of each particular stage and include strategies for managing the challenges and enjoying the opportunities. Parents who appreciate these letters comment that "The letter arrived on exactly the right day!" or "My husband read the letter and thought you were writing about our child!" Staff at the public library report that they always know when the mailings have arrived because the parents come in asking for the children's books and parenting resources recommended in the letters.

A Community-based Approach

Observing the positive approach Baby TALK personnel shared with parents in the hospital, other health and service agencies requested Baby TALK services on their premises. The following programs were established:

- When mothers come to WIC (Women/Infant/Children) offices to receive their supplemental food coupons, the Baby TALK program provides part of the education that makes them eligible for this benefit.
- In the federal housing project where many of Baby TALK's families reside, families can gather at the Baby TALK apartment to chat, cook or play with each other's children.
- Both local hospitals have prenatal clinics for low-income women to receive obstetric services. In 1987, Baby TALK personnel began working with families on each prenatal appointment.
- At the Well Child Clinics at both the Macon County Health Department and the Community Health Improvement Center (CHIC), Baby TALK staff members visit with each family as a part of routine pediatric care or when children are getting immunized. A Baby TALK teacher sees the family before they see the doctor.

Personal visits provide an opportunity to find out what each family is going through, and to discuss the developmental challenges characteristic of the child's age. In these clinical settings, Baby TALK teachers show parents age-appropriate curriculum materials, which can then be used at home. The rapport teachers build with parents through repeated visits enables them to speak intelligently about each family's situation. Parents also know when their own teachers will be staffing the Warmline, so they may call at those times if they prefer.

This curriculum is used regularly at "Baby TALK Times," small parent-child support groups held weekly at elementary schools and other community sites. Additionally, a variation of this curriculum has been developed to teach young mothers at the Teen Parent/Infant Care program run by the Decatur Area Vocational Center.

Being educated about their children empowers parents (Brazelton, 1992) to actively cope with their children's demands rather than be defeated by them. Through anticipatory guidance, Baby TALK teachers give parents specific behavioral strategies for handling situations. Every parent wants to know what to do when a child cries, misbehaves or shows regressive behavior. Simply telling parents "not to worry" or that "this challenge will pass" trivializes the frustration and suffering parents experience. Explaining the causes for children's behavior and giving parents coping strategies, however, lets parents know that their concerns are important. In order for the parent-child relationship to survive these challenges, parents need to know that their concerns are respected and that their re-

lationship with their child is worth all the hard work.

Parents assume that educators are only interested in schools and books, and are amazed to find that Baby TALK teachers care about their child's sleeping, eating and crying habits. The Baby TALK program first addresses those topics that are critical to parents and children, with the understanding that the parent-child relationship is primary to everything else. Academic achievement is more likely when the family's immediate needs have been met.

Reading Aloud

True to its mission, Baby TALK promotes reading aloud as a way to enhance both the parent-child relationship and the child's development. Most early childhood educators agree that young children who have been read to at home usually have an edge over their nonreading peers when they enter school (Durkin, 1986). Certainly, reading aloud does much to develop language, imagination and attention span, and to create an early comfort level with the concept of letters and words (Butler, 1982). Children who have "connected" with books will face the new experience of learning to read with an ease and familiarity not shared by children who have been denied this experience. When parents complain that their child will not go anywhere without a certain book or that he wants the same book read again and again, we congratulate them for having helped their child make this fabulous connection!

What may be more important, however, is the effect reading together has on the parent-child relationship. More than any other single activity, reading together has the potential to enrich the parent-child bond for a variety of reasons:

- ★ Reading together requires a physical closeness that some children do not otherwise seek or receive in the course of a busy day.
- ★ Reading a good book provides a great transition activity. The very act requires that both reader and listener leave behind previous thoughts and moods in order to be in the right frame of mind to enjoy the story. When parent and child are on a collision course toward conflict, reading together may be the very thing to give them a fresh start.
- ★ Reading a book together requires that both parent and child give the activity their undivided attention. This precious time communicates, more than words ever could, that they are important to one another.

The problem with advice to "READ ALOUD!" that many educators give to parents is that it simply does not go far enough (Cullinan, 1992; Trelease, 1989). Parents know they should read to their children, but many of them (particularly parents who are not accomplished readers themselves) are not quite sure how to go about it. They may have unrealistic expectations about what the reading session will be like. They may not understand enough about their children's development to predict their responses. Every teacher knows that reading aloud to a 15-month-old is very different from reading to a 4-year-old, which is very different from reading to a 7-year-old! Unfortunately, parents may expect a toddler to sit quietly and listen to a book, although in that development stage the child may feel compelled to practice walking. The child's body is telling her to move, while her mother is telling her to sit. Consequently, terrific frustration arises for child and parent. Advice to read aloud should always be accompanied by information for making the reading experience developmentally appropriate.

At every stage, the best books can be a help to parents and can provide for children's developmental needs. Toward this end, Baby TALK personnel developed *Read for Joy!* (Quigg, 1993), an easy-to-read manual for parents. This book reviews developmental issues surrounding reading aloud for every stage from infancy to adolescence. Written on a simple reading level, the book is designed for use in family literacy programs. Its beautiful illustrations are taken from ten different books by renowned illustrator Tomie dePaola. The developmental information is new to many parents, including some of Baby TALK's best educated parents. *¡La Alegria de Leer!* (Quigg, 1994), a Spanish translation of *Read for Joy!*, is also available.

Using books and literature in a developmentally appropriate way is possible at virtually every stage of a child's life. Baby TALK teachers encourage parents to show newborns bold, contrasting illustrations in picture books and to chant nursery rhymes. As babies learn to use their hands (at 4 to 5 five months), board books provide a wonderful hinge-type toy for manipulating. Around the time of their first birthday, most babies show an understanding of "beginning-middle-end"—the basics of the earliest simple storybooks. Concept books featuring a photograph and the word naming its object satisfy toddlers' endless desire to learn new words. Bedtime books, by providing a predictable structure to a 3-year-old's unwanted bedtime, can make accepting the inevitable a little easier.

Furthermore, certain books are specifically appropriate for individual children. Decatur Public Library Children's Librarian Katie Gross is a master at finding the book that is "just right" for every child who visits. She remembers what kind of book brought stars to a child's eyes the last time he was in, and she may even have tucked a certain book away for him. Even at a very early age, children have individual tastes in books, just like their parents, and an astute librarian will tune in to them and lure them with books that will suit their appetites.

Baby TALK's GED/Parenting program, operated in conjunction with Richland Community College, uses *Read for Joy!* as a text to teach young parents how to read aloud. During the course of the semester, a system of "borrowing" each other's children gives parents the opportunity to practice reading aloud to children of every age. Books are provided, and parents are brought closer together by getting to know each other's children.

Another collaborative program that capitalizes on the motivational value of reading aloud is a monthly Family Fun Night co-sponsored by Baby TALK and Head Start. The night revolves around a give-away book, but also includes a parent education component and parent-child activities based on book suggestions. The give-away book *A Chair for My Mother*, for example, recommends spending an evening discussing, setting and reaching family goals, as well as constructing a "Dream Book" and a bank in which to save pennies. Parenting topics spun off from children's books are less preachy and more inviting. Parents listen raptly as the evening's book is first read aloud to them, and remember the evening's lessons better because of this connection.

Seeking Answers Together

The Baby TALK program approach of delivering services side-by-side with local colleagues from other disciplines has a multitude of benefits:

- ★ Most important, this approach provides access to the targeted population. Baby TALK personnel do not have to worry about recruiting families. The

program is already established within the families' communities.

- ★ This approach respects parents. We know how hard it is to go somewhere with a newborn in one arm and a toddler pulling on the other. Parents appreciate not having to make a separate effort to go to yet another program.
- ★ Because this combined approach is "owned" by the community, it reduces duplication of services. Partner agencies do not have to create their own parent education programs. Instead, they can all claim Baby TALK and use it to accomplish their goals for families. Quite simply, it makes the most efficient use of resources possible. And parents benefit from the vast expertise of professionals from many disciplines.

A multidisciplinary Board of Directors representing agencies and community interests facilitates the pooling of community resources into a united approach through the Baby TALK program. No one agency carries all of the responsibility, but rather this eclectic group makes policy decisions for the project. The Baby TALK budget reflects both funding and in-kind contributions from most of the partner agencies. Working through a variety of agency structures provides increased access to funding. Grants that are normally available only to school districts or only to hospitals or only to literacy projects are *all* potentially available to Baby TALK. Furthermore, the diverse expertise of Board members increases the chance of successful problem-solving when challenges arise. Certainly, we all know more together than any of us know individually. And Baby TALK's families are the ultimate beneficiaries.

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For more information about Baby TALK, call (217) 475-2234 or write to Baby TALK, 345 West Eldorado, Decatur, Illinois 62522.

Olta Baa Akohwiinidzin, Part Two

Kellamay Kelly

The author's story reflects a dramatic change in tone as she describes her first formal school experiences, which failed to recognize the strong contributions of her home. The following should not be considered representative of the Navajo people. It is based solely upon the author's personal experiences.

When I was 6 years old, I began my formal schooling. I was taken away from my grandparents' home and sent to a foreign institution called a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding school. I was not allowed to speak my native language, nor even think in it. I was forced to eat unfamiliar foods. I could not wear my customary clothes or sleep in a familiar style of bed. They cut my long hair, which I believed was a source of strength, as was Samson's, and the center of intellectual growth. Dormitory living resembled life in a military barracks.

Suddenly, my education was confined to four walls, rather than being enriched by nature and natural processes. I was forced to learn a totally new way of life with a new language and pattern of thinking. I survived four years of this lonely existence by mimicking the teacher and constantly attempting to conform to the strange and incomprehensible requirements of those in authority. When my parents came to visit and brought me treats, my bigger, bullying peers demanded that I give them everything. If I resisted, I was beaten until I gave up. At night, sexual abuse went ignored by the same dorm supervisors who did not allow me to wear underwear under my long nightgown. I found the strength to survive because of my grandmother's constant encouragement to learn, especially how to read in English, and never to give up, no matter how terrible the situation might become.

My complaints about the boarding school convinced my mother to place me in public school for 4th grade. While I was still fearful and painfully shy, at least I could go home to my mother and father each day. Grades 5 through 12, I spent in a parochial boarding school. We were still punished for speaking in our native language and I was once told that my traditional ways were the ways of the Devil. When I thought about my grandparents and my parents, I knew this was not true. Still, life was less harsh because the older students acted as kind and caring big sisters. The parochial school's caring and nurturing atmosphere was based on living a good life through household chores, Bible study and prayers. This was more like home. Books and constant academic study, primarily focused on learning the English language and Anglo-American ways, occupied my entire adolescent life. Teachers and dorm mothers read fantasy stories and classical literature to me, thereby opening up grand vistas of life in other places and times.

Our traditional beliefs place great emphasis upon creating and maintaining harmony with all things in nature. Our language is also very important to us. As has been said of the Ute language, the Navajo language is a living and vital language that has the ability to match any other in the world for expressiveness and beauty. Our language is capable of lexical expansion into modern conceptual fields such as

politics, economics, mathematics and science (Northern Ute Tribe, 1985). The Navajo language plays an essential role in our lives by embodying our thoughts, as well as our healing and regenerative power.

A Navajo individual looks horizontally to four directions for knowledge, in ever-enlarging concentric circles, beginning with self and personal knowledge of life, as he or she experiences each dimension of increasing wisdom. We see little need for artificial division of knowledge into categories because life and natural cycles are forever interrelated and interdependent, in continuous renewal. The Navajo worldview rests upon acceptance of process and it predicts and adapts to change. Acceptance of process includes knowing that context must change. The "Blessing Way" or "Beauty Way" ceremony, for example, is performed in varying lengths with various portions of the whole to prevent negation of natural process, to start one's thoughts up again or to redirect them along happier and more productive lines (Bailey, 1994; Kelly, 1993).

I attribute what success I have had and continue to have to my grandmother's words of wisdom and all that she taught me. It took me longer than usual to complete my college work, but I was persistent. The death of my grandmother during my college years made this struggle more difficult because I missed her so; at the same time, however, it also made me more determined to continue and succeed.

The education trends for Native Americans have changed tremendously since my days in the BIA boarding schools. The most positive change is the incorporation of native language and experiences in the curriculum as a means of building bridges from the familiar to the unfamiliar in learning. Also, schools now actively solicit parental involvement in their children's education.

Of continuing concern, however, is the variety of education systems that serve Navajo students. Presently, Navajo children attend 53 BIA schools, 12 contract and grant schools, 22 private (mostly Christian) schools and 160 public schools (provided by Arizona, New Mexico and Utah). The Dine Nation is presently exploring ways in which it can exert more control over the different schools and ensure that the curricula offered within them addresses the needs of Navajo students. This effort is guided by a vision statement of the Division of Dine Education, which states that, as children of the Holy People, we learn to respect and hold sacred our culture, language, lifeways and our kinship (Pfeiffer & Guy, 1993).

The Dine Nation has launched a major effort focusing on Navajo language and culture, preparing curriculum materials for use in the schools, and also working to expand preschool programs. Since the Navajo Department of Head Start has direct control over its program, it is working toward implementing Navajo as the language of its centers. This department is the largest Indian Head Start and Early Childhood Education program in the United States. Nearly 4,000 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children of low-income Navajo families participate in 164 centers and 44 home-based operations across the Dine Nation. Parents are encouraged to take a vital role in making decisions for the program and its operation. Parents are also participating in the classroom with their children and helping to develop individualized education plans to meet children's needs (Navajo Division of Education, undated). In 1993, the Navajo Nation's first president called a summit to discuss the nation's wellness. The summit was a means to communicate the importance of teaching cultural values characteristic of the Navajo people, values that the Dine young people need for their nation's future well-being.

The Arizona Department of Education allows monolingual English-speaking Navajo children to study the Navajo language in order to meet the requirement

that all K-12 students study a foreign language. This provision opened the way for Navajo immersion programs, the development of Navajo language curriculum and materials, Navajo teacher preparation and certification, and Navajo language and culture instruction.

Celebrating families and literacy through intergenerational programming is very appropriate from a Navajo point of view, for the extended clan family forms the core of existence for an individual. My grandmother and grandfather were my first teachers on the path to literacy. My grandmother offered loving support to *all* her family members. My grandfather lent moral support and encouragement in other, more covert ways. Many Navajo adults experienced the same loneliness of my solitary existence in the boarding school. Happily, separation and estrangement from the family, physical or mental, is no longer necessary. Indeed, familial participation in teaching, defining curriculum and developing language is an increasing reality.

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Weaving Parents As Partners: A Navajo School's Design

Sigmund A. Boloz

Name three things that encourage parents to participate in the education of their children, and three things that discourage them.

I can still remember the lump that lodged in my throat when I was asked this question at a recent early childhood conference. "What an impossible question to answer," I thought. "I'm not sure anyone can create the itemized lists you ask for," I responded. "It all depends on the context in which your school community exists."

This chapter describes a distinctive school environment that includes parents in their children's education. Our efforts to embrace parents as critical members of the education community have developed over a 15-year period and have involved traditional, as well as radical, parent-involvement strategies. Our school atmosphere has taken an unconventional path to education reform—one that originated from within the school rather than being imposed from above.

Background

The Ganado Primary School, serving 475 K-2 students, lies entirely within the boundaries of the Navajo Nation, an environment that is not usually associated with an outstanding school. In 1995, however, the Arizona Educational Foundation and the Arizona Department of Education named Ganado Primary School as one of Arizona's five A+, or outstanding, elementary schools. Within the last five years, the school has received national recognition from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the International Reading Association (IRA), the U.S. Department of Education and the Native American Scholarship Fund.

Ganado Primary School, located in the northeast region of Apache County in Arizona, serves five Navajo Nation chapter communities. This public school serves a predominately Navajo student body, a high percentage of which are economically disadvantaged. Although only 60 percent of the students have been identified as having limited English proficiency, the school staff implements a language-intense program for all students.

Our school's mission is based on three premises: 1) a school staff maximizes its effectiveness when it focuses energies on designing an integrated instructional system, rather than a series of fragmented program options; 2) our students will benefit from a language-intense and meaning-based learning environment and 3) all students benefit when parents are effectively involved in their education. Fulfillment of these three premises requires radical reform.

Sigmund A. Boloz has worked with Navajo children for 25 years. He has been Principal of Ganado Elementary School in Ganado, Arizona, for 16 years. Ganado Elementary School was named the leading school in Arizona in 1995 by the Arizona State Department of Education.

Radical Reform

If parents are to be effectively absorbed into their children's learning, their involvement should not be narrowly defined. Visitors to our school immediately notice the high number of parents who are employed at the school as part-time teachers' aides, as well as the incredible level of student involvement.

Hiring Parents. Ganado Primary School staff hired 42 parents to work within the school. These parents function as teacher assistants, working 3 1/2-hour days to help implement or support all the learning events at the school. They receive parenting and educational training in order to become full partners within the learning process. Consequently, these parents have become ambassadors for our school in the community.

An annual Early Childhood Academy in Ganado has been developed as a powerful staff/parent learning tool. The academy trains parents in their roles as paraprofessionals by focusing on the "why" as well as the "how." Forty teacher assistants and 6 teacher-instructors participate in a week-long summer institute centered on the child.

Many of our children's parents have limited employment opportunities because they have had no previous job experience. Their part-time employment at the school is funded by parent involvement funds from several federal and state projects and serves as an entry to the job market. Because the unemployment level in the area is high (almost 60 percent), the staff hopes that working at the school will not only increase parental involvement, but also would serve as a springboard for other employment.

An unexpected benefit of the program was improved self-esteem among the parents. As one parent stated,

> *I have always cared about my children's education. But when I was unemployed, I felt worthless. Working even part-time within the school caused me to feel important, to care about myself and to see why my children's education was important.*

Natural Extensions. Students also hold important and intensive roles at Ganado Primary School, which are natural extensions of the active, authentic, literate environment that is encouraged within the school. One of our primary efforts is to help parents understand that language-intense experiences are valuable for all students.

Books are everywhere. In addition to the thousands of big books, trade books, and book-and-tape sets in our school library, each classroom contains a library of approximately 1,000 books. The classrooms are designed to be comfortable environments for learning. Couches and rugs encourage reading in a non-restrictive setting. We use tables instead of desks in order to encourage collaboration and cooperative behaviors among the children. We want children to speak and listen to one another, as well as to interested adults. We strive to provide our students with occasions to speak to and learn from one another in whichever language they feel is most natural.

Facilitating Parental Involvement

At Ganado Primary School, nurturing each child's emergent literacy is not just the classroom teacher's job; it is everyone's responsibility. Parental involvement as

partners in their children's education has increased steadily over the years, as has the enrollment at Ganado Primary School. Three major efforts to facilitate this involvement have been building design, instructional clusters and an intervention project.

The Building. Even our school building represents parental involvement. Parents were actively involved in the design of the new Ganado Primary School, which opened in April 1993. The school building reflects the traditional values of the Navajo culture by being culturally relevant in its construction and physical orientation, and as such it is an ideal early childhood learning environment.

To increase collaboration within groups and articulation across grades, the school building is divided into three 11,000-square-foot instructional clusters that surround a 5,000-square-foot library. Each of the three instructional clusters houses nine classrooms and abuts one side of the library. In the traditional Navajo view of the world, the directions North, South, East and West are each associated with a color and a foundation of learning. These also have been incorporated into the school's design.

The East School, or what we refer to as our Special Projects Cluster, has white accents and, in keeping with Navajo tradition, represents critical thinking. The East cluster houses five multiage classrooms and three Project Success classrooms. A student assigned to a multiage classroom at Ganado Primary School will have the same teacher for three years. An equal mixture of kindergarten, 1st-grade and 2nd-grade students work within the same room. Each year, the students play a different role within the classroom community. The Project Success classrooms pair special education students with accelerated role models.

The South School is blue and symbolizes career awareness. The West School is yellow and represents social, interpersonal relationships. Both the South and West schools are family groupings of children that operate as schools-within-a-school (SWAS). Once a learner is assigned to a SWAS, that student will generally remain with that SWAS for the entire three years in Ganado. Although children within a SWAS will have a different teacher each year, they will consistently interact with the nine teachers from that cluster and their support staff.

In an isolated area such as ours, we also use our school to bring parents to us. We cooperate with community agencies, allowing them to use our facilities for parent contacts. Further, we have designed a parent area within the school where parents can sit and browse through materials as they wait for their children. Finally, the school uses this parent area as a museum of sorts, hosting monthly, prominent art exhibits sponsored by the Arizona Commission of the Arts.

Instructional Clusters. While these physical structures may at first appear to be just interesting configurations, we believe that the school-within-a-school designs and multiage classrooms work to encourage parental involvement. Although a child will have a different teacher each year, the SWAS structure allows the child to become a member of an extended family. The parent, therefore, also becomes a member of the SWAS's extended family.

Because each SWAS has a limited instructional staff and a distinctive instructional style or manner of operation, the parent and child become extremely familiar with a small group of staff. The staff comes to know the parent and the child over a three-year period, and is thus better able to involve and nurture that family. Also, because of the similarity in style and procedures within the SWAS, the parent becomes more aware of the school's functions, expectations and goals.

The multiage classrooms are even more powerful in these respects. In a multiage

classroom, the parent and child do not have to adapt to a new teacher each year. Since the child stays with the same teacher for all three years, it is more likely that a long-term, reassuring relationship will develop. The teacher, the parent and the child collaborate in a process of education and benefit from tremendous continuity and shared expectations from year to year.

Parents, as well as teachers, report fewer misunderstandings in a multiage setting. Instead of wasting time learning new homework systems, the parent and teacher spend time strengthening and focusing their support for the child's learning. Teachers have more opportunities to understand each family's circumstances and find parents to be more honest and open about their family situations when they know a teacher over a longer period of time.

Intervention Project. The intervention focus at Ganado Primary School is on 1st-grade classrooms, which enjoy a lower student-teacher ratio and are designed according to the Collaborative Literacy Intervention Project (CLIP) model. This model is highly compatible with the natural language focus of our curriculum. Central to the CLIP program is staff training that provides identified students with daily, 30-minute, one-on-one reading and writing intervention lessons. First-graders identified as being in the lower 20 percent of the class in reading and writing are targeted for this program. Working in cooperation with the Tempe and Holbrook school systems, 24 regular classroom teachers have completed the intensive, year-long staff development program required for CLIP reading certification.

This certification requires a full year's training investment on the part of each teacher. We now have 24 reading teachers working in the building, with exceptional results. Sixty students will benefit from direct intervention during school hours. In addition, 24 students are currently being "clipped" after school by certified teachers who receive extra duty pay.

Parents are also an indispensable component of this approach. Before a child is accepted for CLIP, the teacher and the parent discuss the child's current level of achievement and abilities. For their child to receive CLIP services, parents must agree in writing to read with their children nightly and support their development. The parent is not only offered strategies that may be used at home, but he or she is also invited back several times for process updates and to view actual lessons involving their child.

Conclusion

Ganado Primary School is distinct because of the way it supports continuous learning and sharing among staff members, parents and children. I feel more certain than ever that the school's success with parents is a result of taking cues from its particular community context, rather than adhering to a neat set of rules. Ganado Primary School weaves historic, modern and cultural aspects together to support and educate students and parents, as well as teachers. Here, teaching and learning are everyone's shared responsibilities.

Family Literacy: Writing and Family

Joan Brooks McLane,
with Deirdre Graziano

The Head Start Family Literacy Center operated by the Erikson Institute is located in a church that also houses three Head Start classrooms serving 110 children and their families. "The Center," as most participants call it, functions as a "drop-in" program that is open two days a week during Head Start hours. An Institute faculty member and several graduate students act as program providers and researchers, running workshops, tutoring individual participants, writing field notes, conducting interviews and analyzing data. (Data consist of field notes, "daily activity forms" filled out by Center participants, interviews and participants' writing samples collected over a four-year period. We have detailed case study materials on 38 parents.)

The Center's goals are to support the development of parents' literacy skills, encourage parents' economic self-sufficiency and improve parents' ability to facilitate their children's literacy development. We do this, in part, by presenting new perspectives on writing and reading and offering new options for parents and their children as writers and readers. We provide a range of literacy materials that parents and children can use at the Center or at home. Parents can participate in structured writing and reading activities, where they learn the skills to write personal and family histories, stories, poems, essays, letters and thought pieces. We hold classes on book making with and for children. Our reading and discussion sessions focus on children's early writing development, children's books and the value of reading to children.

Center participants are mostly Head Start mothers; the majority are African American, with a scattering of Latinos, Asians, Native Americans and European Americans. All have children (or have relatives who have children) in the Head Start program located in the same building. Parents can participate either with or without their infants and toddlers, usually while one child is attending a Head Start program and any older children are in elementary school.

Parents come to the Center for a variety of reasons. Some want to help their children learn to read and write or cope with school-related tasks such as homework. Some are pursuing more education for themselves. And some want help in understanding or preparing specific texts (e.g., résumés; job applications; public assistance forms; communications from landlords, immigration officials or their children's teachers). Other parents' reasons may not be related to literacy per se; they may desire social contact, opportunities to make things (e.g., quilts, children's "writing boxes") and/or simply "to get out of the house." While many parents have underdeveloped literacy skills (and many would be labeled "functionally illiterate"), literacy is more complex and varied among this population than is often assumed—they can employ multiple levels of skill and multiple uses of writing and reading

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(Heath, 1983). As program providers, we respond to a complex range of interests and needs, and find ourselves engaged in an ongoing discussion with participants about what the Center's literacy offerings and expectations should be.

Functions of Writing

Because we are particularly interested in the uses, purposes and motives that developing writers, both children and adults, discover as they struggle to communicate through writing (McLane, 1990; McLane & Graziano, 1994, 1995; McLane & McNamee, 1990), we work hard to elicit and encourage writing activities. Head Start parents' writings and children's scribbles, drawings and writings are published three times a year in Center newsletters and magazines, which are distributed to participants, other Head Start parents and staff, and program funders. Publication is a strong incentive for working on a text, and it gives Center staff opportunities to address various difficulties with writing such as grammar, punctuation, organization, focus, persuasiveness and tone.

We analyzed magazine articles and other writing samples, as well as field notes and interviews to determine the personal meaning and significance a range of texts had for their authors, including the "fall out" from writing them. We identified several functional categories of writing (Gundlach, 1982; Gundlach, McLane, Stott & McNamee, 1985; Litowitz & Gundlach, 1987; McLane, 1990; McLane & Graziano, 1994, 1995; McLane & McNamee, 1990; Musick, 1993, 1995; Vygotsky, 1978). This work focuses on writing functions that have the most direct relevance to family literacy: *redoing school, exploring and experimenting* and *reflecting.*

Redoing School. Many Head Start parents, having encountered obstacles to full literacy acquisition, perceive writing and reading as belonging to others; some consider writing and reading to be treacherous activities in which they risk embarrassment, punishment and exclusion (Shaughnessy, 1977). At the Center, parents use writing activities as opportunities to "redo school"—to overcome some of the sense of clumsiness and failure they experienced as children, and to lessen the shame and embarrassment many feel about their literacy skills. Gaining a sense of competence and confidence with writing makes it easier for some to pursue a GED or college courses, or to help their children with literacy-related tasks. For others, increased comfort with writing is important in and of itself:

> *[The Center] gives us a chance to try learning again, without the bad feelings we had in school . . . It's just a chance to find out about the things you missed, if you just got a GED and didn't do all the things you should have done in school. (Interview, CB)*

> *I like [the Center] because it's like a little school. (Interview, PW)*

A parent who went on to the local community college with support, encouragement and prodding from Center staff, said that coming to the Center:

> *made me feel good about myself, feel more confident, feel very comfortable even if I made a mistake. . . . I met a lot of women who had a low self-esteem and who [went] through a different phase. Everybody [at the FLC] is doing something about themselves. Like I started school. Being here helped us. It gave me a push, and I liked it. (Interview, CW)*

Janis, the mother of a preschooler and a teenager, used the Center for both herself and her children. Her primary concern was to "redo school"—to overcome the failure and humiliation she had experienced during her years in public school:

> *No one know how it feel being illiterate. Well, it don't feel good. Some time frustration come. The headache come when you run across something that you don't no how to read. It very difficult and you have to ask for help and they say, 'Now you know that.' I try not to ask people for help because they start saying, then, about you is she is so stupid. (Personal writing shared with Center staff)*

Janis worked with Center staff on improving her reading comprehension and writing skills (particularly spelling, sentence and paragraph construction). Her literacy skills gradually improved over a three-year period. Center staff helped her enter a remedial program at a community college. Later, she took courses in another community college and then enrolled in a nursing assistant training program. She now uses Center resources (reference books, staff assistance) to complete college homework, study for tests and, more recently, get ideas on how to help her children with school requirements (attendance, homework). For example, she helped her younger child learn colors by reading Martin's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*. Janis does *not* want her children to experience school the way she did. Her increasing confidence and competence with writing and reading have increased her ability to help her children with *their* school learning.

Exploring and experimenting with writing. Some parents experiment with different forms and genres of writing, including poetry, song and rap; some write to try out roles and speak in voices other than their own (Britton, 1970). For example, one mother wrote a play about a family torn apart by a father's drug abuse, telling the story entirely through family dialogue. Another conducted a survey of parent satisfaction with Center programming, taking on the role of researcher/evaluator. A third parent wrote an updated, urbanized version of *Little Red Riding Hood*. Such playful, and sometimes political, uses of writing serve to enhance the authors' sense of control and ownership of the written word, and to expand their awareness of what they (and their children) can do with writing (McLane, 1990). Since young children often make their first connections with writing by drawing and playing with writing tools and materials, we urge parents to encourage literacy-related play. We also stress the value of young children's drawing, scribbling and pretend writing as interesting and worthwhile activities that are valid precursors to more conventional (or "real") writing and are evidence, as well, of learning-in-progress.

> *One thing I learned that was interesting was that when they start doing the scribbling in the beginning and stuff . . . I started looking at it closer to see if I could make it out . . . (Interview, BM)*

Reflecting. This category includes three closely related uses of writing as a means of self-reflection.

- ★ ***Self-discovery/self-knowledge.*** Through writing, many participants discover that they have "more inside" of them than they had realized. As one Head Start mother put it, "I had so much hidden inside of me that I didn't know." This discovery encourages some parents to consider new opportunities or alternatives for themselves (such as planning to move ahead in their

Parents and children work together at the Head Start Family Literacy Center.

education or apply for a job). Some realize that they can help their children with literacy tasks and some gain insight about their relationships with their parents and/or children. On the other hand, some participants come to recognize just how difficult and time-consuming it will be to attain particular goals if they fear they will not be able to master required literacy skills.

★ ***Controlling the past and creating a future.*** For many parents, self-discovery through writing means exploring painful past experiences such as teen pregnancy, dropping out of school, the death of a parent, unhappy relationships, sexual abuse, substance abuse and a general sense of failure and missed opportunities. By "speaking the unspeakable," some participants gain insight into and control over the past. The process of putting painful memories down on paper gives the writer the necessary distance to order and reflect on them:

> *Today I wrote a story about how I'm feeling and went back into my life and understood why I am the way I am. It's so strange. I probably knew why I am the way I am but I never had time to write it down and concentrate on it. (Daily activity form, EO)*

Some participants use writing to remind themselves that the past need not, and should not, repeat itself, and to nurture feelings of hope and possibility about the future. This reflection and re-presentation of the self through writing can become a first step toward change and the creation of a new, more optimistic, self-narrative for the future (Litowitz & Gundlach, 1987).

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By reading children's books together, literacy skills are strengthened.

★ ***Parenting; Being a child and being a parent.*** Many Head Start parents use writing to explore and better understand their families—to understand their past and present roles as children and siblings and their current roles as parents. They write to and about their children, expressing their concerns, hopes and pride. Some write to instruct their children in specific skills, to instill values, to inspire better behavior or to promote sibling harmony. Some compose instructive or comforting fantasies, as did two mothers who wrote and illustrated books for their children. In one, *Tres Alegres Mariposas*, a mother describes three butterflies who leave home, weather a storm and live happily ever after. *The Scary Things Book by Mom* was written to ease a 4-year-old's fears of monsters, nightmares and the dark. Some parents write to warn their children against current and future dangers (e.g., strangers, gangs, drugs), and against repeating the mistakes that *they* had made (usually as teenagers). Parents also write for other parents, offering them advice on discipline, drugs, TV viewing and reading to young children. Finally, parents write to better understand, and sometimes redefine, their relationships with their children and/or parents.

An Autobiography

One Head Start mother, Valery, incorporated several of these concerns in *The Growing Years*, her autobiographical account of childhood and adolescence. *The Growing Years* contains vivid, detailed memories of her childhood. It begins when Valery is 3 years old, and goes on to describe her school years, her parents' separation, conflicts with her parents during her rebellious adolescence, moving away from her

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family to live with a boyfriend, becoming pregnant, dropping out of high school four months before graduation, giving birth to her first child, and concludes with the illness and death of her father and the birth of her third child.

After her parents' separation, Valery only saw her father sporadically; she clearly both resented his absence and missed his presence. When he developed cancer and tried to reestablish contact with Valery, however, she resisted visiting him because she could not bear to see him transformed by illness: "He needed someone to be strong for him, and I just wasn't that person." After he died, she was overwhelmed with sadness and remorse. She put those painful and unresolved feelings into a poem, saying in writing what she had never been able to say to him face to face:

Listen to Me
I want to talk to you.
You have to listen
Don't say anything
Just Listen
Can you hear me?

I'm sorry.
I should have listened to you.
Is it too late?
Please don't leave me.
Don't shut me out.
I have to tell you something

Daddy, I love you.
Dedicated to my belated father.
(Published in Center magazine)

Valery gained some insight into and control over her feelings by writing what had once been unspeakable.

Valery worked on the text of *The Growing Years* for several months, during a time when she was concerned about her relationship with her 9-year-old daughter, Monique. Valery explained that she didn't want Monique "to go down the same path" of resentment and rebellion that she had. Speaking of writing her personal history, Valery said:

> *My daughter . . . kind of triggered it off. She got into trouble and lied about it . . . I remembered I had done the same thing . . . If my mom said I had to do something I forced my opinion like a lawyer. [Now] I find my daughter doing the same thing I was doing. (Interview)*

Adding "I lost my mother I got so mad at her," Valery spoke about not wanting to lose Monique. After completing *The Growing Years*, Valery showed it to her mother in the hope of rebuilding their relationship and opening up the topic of her father's death. Her mother was upset and angry, however, demonstrating that putting feelings in writing is a risk as well as an opportunity.

Writing *The Growing Years* appeared to serve multiple functions for Valery. It was 1) a chronicle of her childhood and family for herself and her children; 2) a means of exploring and re-experiencing painful and unresolved feelings about her

adolescence, her relationship with her parents and her father's death; 3) an attempt to better understand herself in her past role as a child and her present role as a parent and 4) a cautionary tale for her children. On the first page of *The Growing Years*, Valery wrote:

> *Dedicated to my children: The road ahead is rocky but the pavement to my heart is smooth. Love Mom.*

The process of putting her past experience down on paper gave Valery time and space for reflection. Re-presenting herself through writing appeared to be the first step toward change and the possibility of creating a new and more hopeful self-narrative (Litowitz & Gundlach, 1987).

Janis also wrote about parents and children in several short pieces for Center magazines. She wrote them in part to better understand and manage her relationship with her troubled and rebellious older daughter, and in part to advise other parents on how to raise their children:

> *Some mothers do not sit down and take time to read to their children as they are growing up. My advice to young mothers: Read more to your children, encourage them as much as possible because if the values are in the home children will accept them. We as parents have a better chance to teach our children as they are growing. We start having trouble when children turn 12 or 13. Kids are getting peer pressure. Kids act like they think that the parents are the enemy . . . (Article for Center Magazine)*

Janis's older daughter wrote about her relationship with her mother from her *own* perspective, as she struggled to communicate with, and be better understood by, her mother:

> *Letter to my mother:*
> *My name is T__. I am 14 years old and I love my mother because she tells me what is right from wrong. My mother don't want me to make the same mistakes she did when she was younger. I found out that is why she is so hard on me the way she is. I know I need to know right from wrong, but man, why does she have to be so hard on me? (Published in Center Magazine)*

Writing about her feelings offered this adolescent girl a means of communicating with her mother that was less provocative and more acceptable than many of their often heated face-to-face confrontations.

Conclusion

These brief glimpses of writing in a Head Start family literacy center illustrate some of the uses and purposes participants discover for writing when they use it to reflect their needs, interests and concerns. In the process of expanding their literacy skills and understandings, participants begin to experience writing as an accessible and powerful tool. They can redefine themselves as capable learners, develop a sense of voice and control, learn about themselves and take the opportunity to record their stories for themselves and others, including family members.

The path to more fully developed mainstream literacy, education and employment is often slow and indirect (Herr & Halpern, 1991), but our experience suggests such a program can and does have value for Head Start parents and their children.

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Building Families, Building Lives: Family Literacy in Immigrant Communities

Gail Weinstein-Shr

Try to imagine what it would be like if you were to resettle in another country with your family. How would you feel if your children quickly learned the native language in school, while you struggled to find language classes after working long days? Intergenerational stresses characterize family life for all people in rapidly changing societies. For language-minority families, however, language and literacy issues add a poignant complication to the challenges of modern life.

By better understanding such families, language and literacy educators can create programs that take into account families' rich resources, as well as the circumstances that underlie their most pressing needs. Only then can we work to strengthen, rather than divide, families and help them cope with a world of uncertainty and change.

Diversity and Sameness: The Splendid Human Tapestry

Refugee and immigrant adults are as diverse as the countries they come from and the circumstances that brought them to the United States. Ethnic groups that may seem homogeneous can be extremely diverse in a number of ways, including linguisticly. Latin Americans, for example, may come from any number of countries and may speak Spanish as a first or second language, and in varieties that may or may not be mutually intelligible. Filipinos come from a nation of tiny islands where no less than 150 mutually unintelligible languages are spoken (California Department of Education, 1988).

In addition, rural and urban differences separate immigrants from the same countries. The first wave of Vietnamese, Cambodian and Cuban refugees, for example, were mostly university-educated city-dwellers; later arrivals were largely farmers who had little formal education (Folsom Unified School District, 1988). Religion is yet another source of diversity. Chinese immigrants may bring Christian, Buddhist or atheist philosophies with them. Language, tradi ional occupations and religion are only a few of the myriad ways in which immigrant communities may be diverse. These differences must be considered when designing education programs that both tap unique cultural resources and speak to the needs of particular immigrant families.

Although diversity exists among refugees and immigrants, some common themes repeatedly emerge when working with uprooted children and adults: survival, communication and power. The examples here are taken from the author's work in Project LEIF (Learning English Through Intergenerational Friendship), an intergenerational tutoring program in Philadelphia in which college students tutor refugee elders. While these examples are drawn primarily from Asian families, they are reminiscent of tales told by the author's own great-grandmother from Poland, as well as those of other immigrants.

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Survival

> *Soldiers come, we run always run. I have my baby inside. I run. Baby come out. I can't rest. My family, we hear guns. I run with baby. When we not run, baby dead. Five my children die from Khmer Rouge in my country.*
>
> *—Cambodian woman*

Refugees who have succeeded in coming to the United States are here against all odds. Survival depended very often on physical endurance, sheer wit and enormous will. If refugees were indeed the "helpless peasants" that they are sometimes made out to be, they would not be here. They would be dead. Those who have made it to the United States are here because they are survivors (Weinstein-Shr, 1994, in press).

The same survival resources that made escape possible often serve immigrants well as they adapt to life in a challenging new setting. Some common coping strategies include reliance on traditional kin networks or creating new kinds of families or cooperative groups for business or child care. Ironically, much of ESL curricula is based on day-to-day "survival skills" of getting access to public services, earning a driver's license and enrolling children in school. At Project LEIF, when adults were asked why they wanted to learn English, their answers rarely reflected these survival issues. Rather, they spoke mostly about wanting to be able to talk with their children and grandchildren. The survival issues of importance to these adults were ones of memory, culture and values.

Some immigrant groups make special efforts to retain oral and written command of their native language and culture. The Chinese community, for example, runs weekend schools to provide formal instruction in Chinese language and culture. Some use the more informal means of one-on-one instruction within the family. On the other hand, in growing numbers of families the parents' proficiency with spoken English is very limited and the children do not speak or write the native language. Communication within families and across generations becomes progressively difficult. What was once a three-generational process of language loss has, in some cases, been accelerated to two. The use of English and native language, and the degree to which native language cultures are nurtured, is an important concern for communities and for educators.

Communication

> *I love my grandchildren very much. I am learning English so I can talk to my grandchildren. But I also want them to understand a little Chinese. I think every language is useful!*
>
> *—Susan Yin, 1992*

Whether immigration is forced or voluntary, resettlement in a place where a different language is spoken profoundly affects newcomers' roles and interpersonal relationships. Project LEIF participants exemplify these changes. One tutor asked his quiet, serious tutee if Cambodia has open-air markets like Philadelphia's Italian market. The tutee's grandson translated her description of the long pleasant afternoons she used to spend with friends at the marketplace. Until then, her tutor had not recognized the bubbly, sociable, talkative person that his student could be. An inability to communicate prevents many immigrants from showing their true per-

sonality to others in the new community.

Changes in language situation have other important consequences for families. One Hmong woman laments that her children no longer remember life in Laos and she cannot adequately describe the courtship songs, the tools or the daily chores because her children do not understand the Hmong words. Language plays a direct role in the ability of elders to tell important stories to their children and grandchildren and thereby keep them connected to their culture. Experience with other cultural groups, such as Native Americans and Chinese, suggests that the degree to which children feel connected to their own past has important consequences for their confidence in the present. (In this author's view, it may also affect the degree to which they will seek connectedness through membership in gangs.)

In addition, proficiency in English communication deeply affects the ways families manage daily living. Because they have more opportunities to hear, study and interact in English, children learn the new language much more quickly than their parents or grandparents. As a result, adults must often rely on children for brokering information and for solving language-related problems. One man reports that he did not know his son had been expelled from school until a neighbor told him six months later. The boy had left the house every day at eight and returned at four. Like many immigrant parents, the man had depended on the boy to decipher school communications.

Power

> *I have ears, but I am deaf! I have a tongue, but I am mute!*
> *—Chinese elder, on life in an English-speaking neighborhood*

What happens when children become their families' translators, decoders and messengers? One tutor working with an Asian family found posters of leather- and chain-clad heavy metal musicians in the kitchen and living room of his elder tutee and wondered who was in charge. In a second case, a Laotian teen sabotaged his mother's efforts to learn English by disrupting her English lessons with condescending comments and repeatedly telling her that she was too old to learn. Even when children were willing to support their parents' efforts to learn English, adults often reported feeling ashamed when they had to depend on their children to solve problems.

Such power shifts may be as uncomfortable for children as they are for adults. When Asian teenagers were asked to give advice to teachers at a local conference, one response was particularly noteworthy. "Please," commented a young Vietnamese man, "if I translate for you when you talk to my mother, don't look at me. Look at her when you speak." It would appear that the way in which educators interact with family members can either support or, unwittingly, undermine parent authority.

Both children and adults clearly have a vested interest in family units in which the adults are in charge and able to provide care and guidance to their children. The ways in which we interact with families, as well as the way in which we provide literacy instruction, can either support and value adult knowledge or weaken adult authority within the family unit. For our family literacy programs to be effective within immigrant communities, the pressures on both children and adults cannot be ignored.

New Lives, Strong Families

If you were to resettle in another country, you would surely want your children to

do well in school. But that would be only one of your concerns. To what extent, with your limited language proficiency, would you be able to guide, discipline and protect your children and take care of your aging parents? How would you maintain the family's strength and unity? How would you manage to transmit and maintain the cultural values and information that have sustained you throughout your own life? Who would understand your needs? Who might you look to for support?

Developing a positive and productive new life for all family members within a new language community and alien culture is truly a complex task fraught with many complications. If education programs for immigrant families are to be successful, programmers must collaborate with the immigrant community to learn how family strengths may be built upon in support of intergenerational learning.

Those who wish to involve limited English proficiency parents may wish to learn about: 1) the structure and characteristics of the communities to which target families belong; 2) the language, literacy and educational profiles of communities and their members and 3) the most pressing concerns of adults in their roles as parents.

★ **Structure and Characteristics of Refugee and Immigrant Communities**

- **Diversity**

Guiding Questions:
In the communities you wish to serve, in what ways are members diverse?
How are divisions expressed in the communities?
What are the groups and sub-groups?

Ethnic groups that may seem monolithic can be extremely diverse in any number of ways. As mentioned earlier, language, education, traditional occupations and religion are only a few of the myriad ways in which immigrant communities can differ. In the seemingly homogeneous Hmong refugee community in Philadelphia, one study showed the existence of two subgroups with very different kinship patterns and different goals for literacy—a situation with profound implications for educational programming (Weinstein-Shr, 1993).

- **Community Leaders and Other "Key Players"**

Guiding Questions:
In the communities you wish to serve, what organizations have a history of service to the group?
Who are the key leaders, both native and non-native?
How can you enlist their help?

To learn about the target group and to gain their trust, it will be necessary to have the help of community members. Ethnic leaders may be in visible positions, such as heads of mutual assistance associations, or they may be "unknown" to outsiders while well-known within the communities themselves. Both native and non-native religious leaders, resettlement agency workers, directors of senior centers and teachers are "key players" who may be known and trusted by the community.

- **Traditional Families, New Families**

Guiding Questions:
Who are members of the families you wish to serve? (How do they themselves see the boundaries?)
What are kin patterns and social networks that influence how people manage?

Who are the caretakers for children in the families you wish to serve?

Newcomers to the United States may bring with them very different ways of defining family relationships. Hmong refugees of the same generation who share a clan name consider themselves "brothers" or "sisters," and associate specific rights and obligations with those clan mates (Weinstein-Shr, 1993). Laotian women form cooperative groups for rearing children, a pattern that often continues in America (California Department of Education, 1989). Cambodians fled in such tragic circumstances that it was rare for a nuclear family to resettle intact. Cambodian families in America are often made up of survivors who create nonbiological bonds to cope with terrible loss (California Department of Education, 1988). Many Southeast Asian refugee households are headed by women because so many men were lost in the wars. To provide an education program with a family approach, it will be necessary to understand the nature of the families from an outside as well as an inside perspective.

★ **Language, Literacy and Education: Community and Individual Profiles**

- **History**

Guiding Questions:

What were the educational experiences of target families in their homelands?

What were the circumstances of flight, and the nature of interruptions in schooling?

What is the history of experience with native language literacy?

In order to meet the needs of uprooted families, it is helpful to know what educational resources they have brought with them. Koreans, for example, come from a country where 97 percent of the population is functionally literate (California Department of Education, 1992). In Korea, virtually all citizens have access to public education. As immigrants rather than refugees, Koreans had time to prepare, plan and make their move with minimal stress and interruption to their own or their children's education. Often, in fact, the move was an attempt to improve educational opportunities. In contrast, Cambodians with any educational experience were the first to be exterminated under the Pol Pot regime. Those who escaped either had little education or were able to hide it. Centuries of literature were destroyed. Many refugees began their educational experiences in refugee camps. Depending on the time and the camp itself, a variety of educational experiences were available to different refugee groups. Literacy and schooling are not always synonymous. Many Hmong refugees from Laos, despite a history of inexperience with formal schooling, have been quite successful at learning Hmong literacy through informal channels, such as one-on-one teaching by family members.

- **Language Use in the Community: Current Practices**

Guiding Questions:

What are attitudes towards native language literacy in the target community?

What are the supports for development and use of native language among children and adults?

What are parents' language and literacy goals for themselves and for their children?

How can your educational efforts support native language development?

Some uprooted groups make special efforts to promote oral and written

native language development. When bilingual programs are not provided by an American school district, some groups, such as the Chinese, pay extra to send their children to private, native language schools. Other groups are anxious to acculturate as quickly as possible, and therefore encourage their children to make the transition from the native language to English. Lily Wong-Fillmore (1991) suggests that immersion in English at too early an age can be devastating to family relationships if support for native language development is lacking. The work of Jim Cummins (1989) also suggests that lack of foundation in a native language interferes with development of language and literacy in the second language.

- **Roles of Teachers, Parents and Children**

Guiding Questions:

What is the traditional relationship of teachers and parents in the country of origin for the community you wish to serve?

What are the norms for interaction between adults and children in this community?

How do your program activities fit (or not fit) these norms?

What are possible avenues for adjustment or negotiation?

In order to invite adults to participate in their children's schooling, it is helpful to have some information about relationships among teachers, parents and children in the country of origin. Many Asian immigrants, such as the Laotians, place a high value on education, but also feel that teachers should tend to children's moral and spiritual education. Cambodians refer to teachers as the "second parent," someone to be entrusted with the child's care. Some cultures feel it is inappropriate for parents to intervene in any way with the teacher's job. Families such as these may be quite puzzled when they are invited to give input. A passive parental role may be exacerbated by language barriers and ignorance about the American school system. A second consideration for program planners and recruiters to consider is the sociolinguistic rules governing behavior between children and adults. One researcher comments that in the Filipino culture, not only are children not to be heard, they also are to remain unseen (California Department of Education, 1988). Some of the interactions inherent in an American education program would seem inappropriate to adults and children who are operating under unspoken rules that require children to signal respect by repressing their own ideas and desires in the presence of adults. Among Hmong refugees, children learn by observing adults and by talking with peers. Conversations between children and adults are not the norm.

★ **Addressing the Concerns of Adults**

Every parent wants their child to succeed in school. Scholastic success, however, is only one of many concerns that uprooted adults face in adapting to life in a new country. If a program is going to attract adults, it will be necessary to, at the very least, be aware of those concerns and, better yet, address them.

Guiding Questions:

What are the most pressing general concerns of the adults in the target community?

What are their specific concerns about their children's schooling?

What are possibilities for providing opportunities for adults to discuss their concerns with one another?

What are possibilities through your program for helping adults gather information about the school system, drugs, discipline, child abuse laws or any other concerns they may have?

- ***Surviving trauma.*** Some problems are serious: post-traumatic stress syndrome is the rule rather than the exception for survivors of genocide. Depression, alcoholism and other problems may be symptomatic of this affliction. When adults are dealing with serious physical and emotional stresses, it may be difficult for them to make involvement in their children's schooling their first priority.
- ***"Discipline" in a dangerous world.*** When Cambodian parents come together, they often commiserate about their children being out of control. Often living in poor neighborhoods where drug activity is rampant, adults fear for their children's lives. One author notes that a once patriarchal society became matriarchal through war losses, and then "filiarchal" as children control more and more interactions in the new culture. For Cambodian parents, "discipline" is a recurring issue—their children seem to do as they please. Furthermore, U.S. child abuse laws are an area of concern and puzzlement.
- ***Changing roles of girls and women.*** To protect their children and promote their interests as they see them, many parents demand that their girls come home immediately after school. Household chores not only contribute to the family's well-being, but also prepare a young woman for marriage in many cultures. These goals, appropriate in the country of origin, may be in direct conflict with expectations of American schools and American society in general.
- ***Differences in priorities between native and host cultures.*** For Korean parents, among others, their children's scholastic success is a reflection on the family as a whole, and is thus a source of pride or shame. Extracurricular activities may be considered a distraction from the serious work of study. Children are soon caught between two worlds: one where serious study is paramount, and the family name is at stake, and another where balance of work, play and social activity are valued and encouraged. It is important for adults to have information about American values and to learn about the pressures that their children are under to follow American norms. It is also helpful for American educators to understand the perspectives of nonnative parents.

The above topics and guiding questions are beginning points from which family literacy programs can build. These may not be the most important issues for the communities you wish to serve. In order to respond appropriately to uprooted families, the most important strategy is to take an inquiring stance. Invite community leaders and families to teach you about themselves and their concerns. Thus, you can learn together how best to serve their unique education needs.

When families provide haven and security, adults and children are in a better position to take care of themselves and one another. Communities have much to gain from the prospect of interdependent families whose members thrive in synergy. Furthermore, families in multilingual communities are like a treasure chest

of linguistic and cultural riches. It is through families that culture is first transmitted and values are taught, making the life journey manageable and meaningful. As educators, we can either tap and nurture these riches or preside over their rapid demise. The thoughtful development of family literacy efforts can play an important role in determining which of these roads we choose to travel.

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Achieving Science Literacy: A Parent and School Partnership

Robert E. Rockwell, Robert A. Williams, David A. Winnett, Lela M. DeToye and Elizabeth A. Sherwood

> *The scientifically literate person is one who is aware that science, mathematics, and technology are interdependent human enterprises with strengths and limitations; understands key concepts and principles of science; is familiar with the natural world and recognizes both its diversity and unity; and uses scientific knowledge and scientific ways of thinking for individual and social purposes.*
>
> *—American Association for the Advancement of Science [AAAS], 1989, p. 16*

The lack of scientific literacy among parents, administrators and early childhood educators is a significant problem. Sparking children's interest in learning should be, by everyone's standards, the primary goal of education. How does one set out to develop a "whole" curriculum that meets the needs of children who will be moving into a technologically oriented society? The answer is: with parents help, of course.

Educators must consider parents' participation because parents, as children's first caregivers and teachers, have both the right and the responsibility to be involved in their children's formal education. Rockwell, Williams and Sherwood (1993) suggest that parents, children and teachers must work as partners to acquire the knowledge that is vital to producing science literacy. Before involving parents, however, the curriculum developer must first consider how to develop a good science program that can later be shared with parents.

A Prerequisite: Setting Goals for Science Learning

Science in the curriculum can help children develop their inquiry skills and guide them to use these skills to find answers for the questions of why, what, where and how. Parents and teachers play a major role by encouraging development (Holt, 1989).

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A successful science program should recognize the learner's ultimate responsibility for learning, allow for differences among learners and enable children to fulfill Jean Piaget's goal of education: "To create people who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done—people who are creative inventors and discoverers" (Piaget, 1952, p. 60). The following goals are the foundations for building such a program:

- ★ Promote the development of fundamental problem-solving skills
- ★ Promote personality dispositions indicative of good scientific problem solvers
- ★ Promote awareness of careers in science, mathematics and technology
- ★ Raise children's comfort and confidence level with science through conscious efforts to counter bias against science
- ★ Promote development of a knowledge base of basic scientific principles and laws, providing a solid foundation upon which a clear and accurate understanding of the world can develop that will reduce the risk of children acquiring misconceptions (Winnett, Williams, Sherwood & Rockwell, 1994).

The importance of developing investigative skills cannot be overemphasized (Rivkin, 1992). Although such skills are not always used in a linear approach, they should be presented in a developmental context. For example, children should be encouraged to make careful and meaningful observations of magnetic behavior before they attempt to explain what magnets can do.

Science content for young learners should nurture conceptual understanding, rather than focusing on facts and isolated topics. Conceptual understanding allows children to function in a confusing world (Loucks-Horsley et al., 1990). By presenting only a few concepts and developing them to a level of conceptual understanding, children can actually be exposed to more information and gain greater understanding. In this sense, less presentation can actually result in more learning taking place (AAAS, 1989, 1993). Parents can help in this effort.

Involving Parents in Science Education

Effective parent involvement requires teachers to acknowledge parents as children's earliest and most effective teachers. Trying to educate children without the help and support of the home is difficult. Science offers an often overlooked vehicle for involving parents in their children's learning. Elements presented in the Discovery Science program provide a useful framework that can be duplicated or adapted for developing an effective collaboration between the home and the school. All those involved in this partnership effort share the common goal of young children's education. The primary focus for any curriculum must be working with parents to assist children, and to provide effective home and school learning environments. The benefits of a parent-teacher science partnership include:

- ★ Greater understanding by parents of their children's science education program
- ★ Greater understanding by teachers of the children's home science background, their needs and parental expectations
- ★ Better communication among home, school and the science community
- ★ Fewer crises and misunderstandings about expectations at school and home
- ★ Greater comfort with science, resulting in increased self-confidence for children, parents and teachers
- ★ More goodwill and greater respect between parents and teachers

- ★ Increased achievement in the science and mathematics areas (Rockwell, Andre & Hawley, 1996).

Helping Parents Become Effective Science Teachers

Just as it is important to go beyond textbooks in teaching, it is necessary to go beyond traditional views of parents' roles in the schools and in learning. Parents with limited academic skills, and even those who are quite knowledgeable, may be operating under the assumption that they do not know how to help their children learn. This is especially true when they are asked to assist their children in acquiring reading, science and mathematics skills. Science can become a refreshing and comfortable new realm for intergenerational learning, however, and is often an overlooked vehicle for involving parents in their children's learning.

With minimal guidance, parents can learn effective strategies for supporting science learning. Observation, for example, is the most basic science skill and comes naturally to everyone. It is a simple combination of sensory perception, attention to detail and processing of acquired information. Parents can share their own observations with their children and listen appreciatively to what their children have to say. Robert Frost said, "[The] Sunset is always in horizontal layers. That is science, but it's poetry, too" (Frost, 1953).

Children are born asking questions. Before they can talk, babies "ask" with their eyes, ears, hands and mouths. Parents need to be encouraged to keep this skill alive by sharing their own questions with children and looking for answers. "I wonder where that ant lives? Let's follow it and find out." "I've never changed the belt on the vacuum cleaner. Want to help me figure it out?" In these approaches, neither the parent nor the child is "put on the spot" (Rockwell, Williams & Sherwood, 1992).

Parents can encourage a child's natural curiosity and desire to understand the world. When the child asks, "How can I make bigger soap bubbles?," parents do not have to worry about knowing the right answer. By experimenting along with the child they help develop inquiring minds and perceptive senses, rather than acting as storehouses of disconnected information. Parents and children alike should be encouraged to experience the wonder and delight inherent in discovery. By supporting questioning and problem-solving, parents encourage children to communicate their findings at home. Sharing at home gives children the practice and confidence they need to communicate effectively at school.

Connecting Science to Language and Mathematics

Science provides an engaging context through which children can develop language and mathematics skills. Sharing scientific observations and discoveries orally, or through writing and drawing, is an authentic and natural way for children to expand their vocabularies and experiment with different language formats. In the same way, quantifying scientific observations by counting or by comparing findings in charts or graphs provides a real motivation for developing these basic mathematics skills.

Teachers can support parent-child communication by keeping parents informed about classroom activities through newsletters and notes. Teachers can make suggestions for parent-child conversations at home that support classroom study. Parents and children can work together on take-home projects such as making observations, collecting data, keeping records and making plans for sharing their discoveries at school.

Providing Role Models for Science Learning

Science role models are important for children's overall development. Teachers can model good science by using hands-on materials, creating developmentally appropriate tasks that represent good science, developing questioning skills around the apparatus and materials of science, and bringing in others who represent good science. Teachers need to emphasize to parents the importance of showing interest and enthusiasm toward their children's observations and questions. Equally important to both is the ability to recognize and talk with their children about people in the community who use science skills in their occupations. Special attention should be given to females and minorities, who are currently underrepresented in these fields.

Planning for Parent Involvement

For parents to feel confident in their ability to support their children's learning, teachers need to search out and recognize parents' resources. Planning parent involvement should be an integral part of any unit of study. Begin by informing parents about what will be explored with children in the classroom and develop take-home activities for them to do with their children. A list of materials parents might be able to provide should be developed (Williams, Rockwell & Sherwood, 1987). Find out who grows orchids or radishes, who has an iguana and who can show the children how a belt makes the brushes turn on a vacuum cleaner. In this way, teachers can get to know parents better as they discover ways to better support the science program. Time spent on such planning pays off in significant ways.

In published programs such as Discovery Science (Winnett, Rockwell, Sherwood & Williams, 1995), each family receives a letter explaining the upcoming unit of study, listing materials that parents might contribute and outlining ways they might participate. Take-home activities for the parents and child, called Family Connections, are suggested. These activities reinforce what the children are learning at school, rather than introducing new concepts. Children are empowered because they are given the opportunity to share knowledge and expertise with their families. Materials and directions for the simple activities are sent home in resealable plastic bags. The parents and children do the activity together and have the option of sending back either a response or the results.

During field testing of the Discovery Science animal unit (Winnett, Williams, Sherwood & Rockwell, 1994), children were exposed to as many animals as the time and situation would permit. During the One Week Zoo segment, parents were very willing to bring their pets to school. Throughout the week, pythons, cockatoos, dogs, iguanas and pet goats proceeded through the school in an orderly procession. Each parent volunteer shared information about the animal and helped the children get to know them. Interest was high for children and parents alike. This successful exercise, using animals as a bridge between home and school, provided many of these inner-city residents their first successful attempt at helping in the schools. Positive parent-teacher contact was established and continued through the year.

Breaking the Ice Through a Parent Science Meeting

Many ways exist for communicating with parents about how to support their children's science learning. One of the most effective methods is to conduct a meeting that involves parents and children. Because learning by doing is the best method, a series of science activity stations for the parents and children to enjoy together

should be developed. By selecting activities that are exciting and easy to do, a successful meeting will be ensured. Few parents fail to respond to the excitement they see generated in their children. They immediately recognize that science is something they can enjoy and succeed in with their children.

Arrange to have the children supervised at the end of the meeting so you can take time to discuss the evening's outcomes with the parents alone. Child care can be traded with another teacher who is having a meeting on a different night or by asking a scout troop or other organization to help. Only a few key points need to be presented to the parents, including tips on how to help children focus their observations, ask questions and communicate about the experiences. The discussion should also focus on helping parents understand that children can be successful in science even if an experiment did not "work out the way we thought it would."

Getting Materials Home to Parents

Some teachers have developed a whole series of parent-child activity kits that are sent home in bags. The results have been extremely positive. One group of kindergarten teachers put together a set of 20 different kits. Parents sewed bags to hold the kits. Other teachers purchase or use donated bags. Each kit contains the directions and materials for a simple activity. Activities are chosen that are likely to engage both parent and child. At a parent meeting, teachers explain the programs to the parents before working together to assemble the kits. Materials are checked out on a library system. Upon completion, the kit is returned and children can check out new ones. Relevant books are added to many of the bags, as are writing activities (Rockwell, Andre & Hawley, 1996).

Taking Family Field Trips

The zoo, a museum or the local park can offer children enriching experiences that they can apply to classroom activities. Because many schools do not have the resources necessary to visit such places, parents can provide these experiences for their children. Any unit on animals can be greatly enhanced by studies of animals in the zoo, at home, on a farm or in the wild. Parents become the teachers during these activities and the children can share their experiences with the rest of the class. Teachers can offer suggestions for family field trips.

Conclusion

Families can be involved in the acquisition of science literacy in many ways. As parents and teachers create additional ways of supporting science, increased learning will surely emerge. Programs such as Discovery Science provide a useful framework for creating an effective parent involvement program that encourages parents and children to explore and discover their natural world together.

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Tote Bags: An Innovative Way To Encourage Parent-Child Interaction While Learning a Second Language

Allison Reeves

Teachers understand that parental involvement in children's learning is critical. The challenge, sometimes a difficult one, is how to inform parents about ways in which they can support their children's school learning in the home. Such communication is especially difficult with parents who do not come to school on a regular basis and/or whose native language and culture is not the same as that of the school. The "Tote Bags" project described in this chapter was designed to provide parents and children with purposeful language activities to share at home throughout the school year. The activities give parents and children a focus for conversation in English, helping the children increase their comfort and fluency with the language. The project has proved to be popular with both generations.

The Tote Bag project was developed and implemented at the Chinle Unified Schools in Arizona. Some background information about the history and setting of Chinle Unified Schools may help explain the motivation for the project. As a provision of the Treaty of 1868, the Navajo nation pledged to compel their children to attend school from ages 6 to 16. Many families, however, refused to send their children to school.

The Presbyterian Board of Missions administered those first Navajo schools. According to national policy at that time, the Presbyterian Mission schools were responsible for the "Christianization" and "civilization" of the Navajos. By the 1930s most students attended either day schools or boarding schools run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). Today, most Navajo children living on reservations, including those in the Chinle area, attend public schools.

The percentage of children enrolled in reservation schools remained low until after World War II. Navajos who served in the armed forces may have recognized that "their own lack of education, their inability to use the English language and their unfamiliarity with a wage economy handicapped them in the employment market" (Thompson, 1975, p. 77). According to Thompson, more and more Navajos began to think that public school education would benefit their children.

The community of Chinle, Arizona, is uniquely different from the average American community. Chinle is situated in the heart of the Navajo Nation, an area approximately the size of West Virginia. It lies at the mouth of Canyon De Chelley (pronounced "dih shay"), a sandstone canyon containing Anasazi ruins that attract hundreds of thousands of tourists each year from around the world. Although the Chinle area has many modern conveniences, many Americans would consider it quite rural. Most side roads are earthen; some families do not have running water. The district buses children from as far as 40 miles way; some students spend up to 2 hours a day on the bus.

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As an ESL teacher, I was faced with the challenge of educating students who are, on average, two years behind in English language proficiency. Lack of parental involvement in the schools and limited English usage in the home compounded this lack of fluency. The problem of noninvolvement was exacerbated by the geographical distances separating some families from the school. In some cases, an emotional distance existed because of the parents' unfamiliarity and/or discomfort with the formal learning setting. We wanted to find a way to increase parent/child support for school learning through home activities and to increase the children's English usage and fluency. The solution, the Tote Bag project, was originally conceived by a colleague, Laura Henry.

Acknowledging parents' success in teaching the children their native language and many aspects of their rich culture, we were looking for a way to tap this ability in support of developing English fluency and vocabulary. We began work on the basis of several assumptions: all parents are willing to help their children learn; enjoyable and meaningful activities might provide the focus for intergenerational learning; and a wide variety of reading, writing and speaking activities will strengthen skills in these areas. The goals for the project were to provide a focus for increased parent/child interaction in English; to increase students' fluency in speaking, reading and writing English; to increase students' confidence in these areas; and to foster positive relationships between the home and school. We decided to center the activities around picture storybooks and to make the activities as close to "real life," or meaningful, as possible.

One of the most popular Tote Bags is based upon Tomie dePaola's *Strega Nona*. In the bag is a copy of the book; a laminated folder printed with simply stated directions, discussion questions and journal prompts; and a box of spaghetti and a can of spaghetti sauce. Each child pops his own journal into the Tote Bag before taking it home. They record their responses to the activity in the journal. Other very popular Tote Bags with cooking themes make use of such books as: *Blueberries for Sal; If You Give a Mouse a Cookie; Bread, Bread, Bread; The Gingerbread Man; Chicken Soup with Rice; Pancakes, Pancakes.*

Seeds and potting soil accompany Heller's book *The Reason for a Flower.* In the popular Tote Bag based upon *The Jolly Postman* by Janet and Allan Ahlberg, families find a copy of the book, stamps, writing paper and envelopes, the class address book (made especially for this purpose and with a great deal of excitement) and the laminated folder with simply stated directions and discussion questions for possible journal entries. Proof of this particular Tote Bag's success is evident to this day when the mailman brings me letters from my former students. The laminated folders in each Tote Bag list the items that need to be returned. Any consumables used to complete each activity do not need to be replaced.

The project was funded with Chapter 1 money earmarked for improvement of parent involvement. Individual teachers were encouraged to initiate the funding requests. Grants of up to $1,000 per year were awarded.

The Tote Bag pilot project took place at the Chinle Kindergarten Center. Revisions were made to improve the Tote Bag contents, activities and management system, and the project was used the next year in five classrooms. After a third revision, a total of 25 different Tote Bags have been duplicated for use in 10 out of 12 classrooms in the school.

The project was successful. Most notably, parent feedback was extremely positive. Parents were willing to come and help create new folders and to refill the bags at the end of each week. Each child took home only one Tote Bag per week. The

↑ *Demeshia Claushee and Danelle Benally share a Tote Bag game.*

↑ *Tamara Dedman is getting ready to head home with her Tote Bag.*

↑ *Tote Bags in storage.*

→ *Ella Jim, a teacher assistant, is debriefing the* Three Little Pigs *Tote Bag with Denise Yazzie and Ryan Smith.*

children were always excited about getting a new one and responsibly returned the bags, earning the opportunity to take another. In the two years I worked with the project, only one bag was lost.

The excitement generated by the Tote Bags did not stop with taking the bag home. Related conversations at school were gratifying. The children proudly shared the things they had made with their parents. Others shared pictures and stories from their journals. Those who had received letters, as part of the *Jolly Postman* activity, could not wait to read them to the class. Each morning, time was set aside to share their experiences. Numerous possibilities for language extension activities arose as we picked up on high interest topics.

Administrative problems were few. The students themselves signed out the Tote Bags using a large chart. Storage, however, can be a problem. Materials for 25 Tote Bags that will be refilled approximately 20 times take up a lot of space. You can imagine how much space you might need for 20 boxes of spaghetti, 20 jars of spaghetti sauce, 20 boxes of muffin mix, etc. The storage cabinet may begin to look like

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a department store. And the variety of contents is limited only by your imagination. A coat rack works well for hanging heavy repacked bags.

The most labor-intensive part of the project was creating the folders and coming up with ideas for truly meaningful activities. Parent volunteers and other teachers can help. While most of the activities in the Tote Bags were specifically designed around literature, many teachers devote their Tote Bags to extending other subject areas, like math and/or science.

While no proof exists of a cause-and-effect relationship between the Tote Bag project and greater English fluency or increased parent involvement, most students did make considerable progress on Early Prevention of School Failure test scores and parent reactions were extremely positive. Journal entries and other creative and/or edible products that resulted from the Tote Bag activities provided a great deal of stimuli for extended language activities at school. It appeared that at least one bridge between home and school had been joyfully built and crossed.

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A Journey with Families

Barbara Grace and Deborah Moberly
Contributions by Maryanne Chrisman, Belinda Conner, Nancy Pittman and Diane Richey

Through Even Start Family Literacy programs, parents and children can learn together and enhance each others' lives. These programs provide family literacy experiences through integrated services of adult and parenting education, early childhood education and parents and children learning together. In addition, the program encourages the facilitation and documentation of families' progress.

The Southern Region Even Start Family Literacy (SRES) program, based in three rural Illinois school districts, addresses the challenges of integrating services for families and documenting the families' growth. This chapter identifies strategies that have been successful in meeting these two goals.

Integrating Even Start Service Components

The key to SRES's effectiveness is parent involvement in the program planning process. Such planning continually occurs on an informal basis. Parents often make suggestions while at the center, on home visits or during informal outside discussions. More formal planning sometimes occurs at weekly parent group meetings when staff members carefully listen to parents' interests and concerns.

Adult education is an important component of Even Start programs. Some parents, however, are uncomfortable in formal ABE or GED classes. Therefore, SRES adult education is interwoven throughout the family literacy program within the context of everyday living and learning. The following example illustrates this approach to adult education:

Donna is a single mother of three children ages 3, 7 and 10. She is a young and energetic mother who became pregnant as a high school senior and, therefore, was unable to complete her basic education. She dropped out of high school during her senior year to begin raising her first child.

Living in a small rural farming community, Donna is isolated from other adults. She relies on her three daughters for support, companionship and strength. Donna wants her daughters to be independent and well educated. As a result, her expectations for the girls are sometimes unrealistic. When teaching her children, she relies mainly on rote memorization and concept drilling in isolation. Donna becomes frus-

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trated with the girls when they do not respond as she wishes or become bored; at such times, she resorts to scolding them into compliance.

Donna wanted to earn her GED, but feared adult interaction. During several home visits, Donna, in collaboration with the SRES Parent Educator, developed the following goals:

- *To develop socialization skills for both Donna and the girls*
- *To develop relationships with other families to facilitate transportation for daily living tasks*
- *To set realistic education expectations and guidance strategies for each child*
- *To complete the GED program.*

Through continued home visits, the Parent Educator developed a trusting relationship with Donna. One of Donna's first major steps was agreeing to participate in a planned center day.

Parent-child interaction time is emphasized at Even Start programs as opportunities for parents to communicate with their children while playing and to develop greater understanding about developmentally appropriate approaches to learning. Center days are times when parents and children can interact in playful and meaningful settings. One such event, a Peter Rabbit Tea Party, provided an excellent opportunity for creative interactions.

Donna brings her daughter Crystal to the tea party and, at first, remains very close to her, sometimes even following her around. The tea party offers all kinds of experiences for families. Parents and children measure and mix ingredients for muffins that they will be later serving. After reading The Tale of Peter Rabbit, *parents discuss guidance issues. Peter's adventure sparks a lively discussion about natural consequences as an appropriate strategy. Children and parents act out the story, using costumes and props. As children paint a mural depicting scenes from the story, parents and staff print story dictations on the mural. Finally, the tea party is set up, complete with refreshments prepared by parents and their children and lively conversation about the day's activities. Donna and her daughter participate throughout the session and leave the tea party with glowing smiles on their faces and paintings and story dictations to take home.*

Integrated family literacy activities also occur on field trips that introduce parents and children to new experiences and community resources. A 30-mile train trip provided an exciting culminating experience following two days of center activities that began with a reading of *The Polar Express*. In preparation for the train trip, Family Resource Center personnel gathered children's literature about trains and displayed pictures of locomotives, steam engines, passenger trains and freight trains. The science center featured a variety of wheels for children and their parents to explore. The reading center offered appropriate resource books, and train songs were chanted throughout the day.

Staff and parents spent center day organizing the train trip and discussing strategies for traveling with children. Children participated in the discussion, and the group made a list of things to do in preparation for the trip. Donna and Crystal planned together and decided to bring a favorite baby doll, in addition to a "fun bag" and a snack. Excitement filled the air as families began anticipating the train

ride, which for many was a first.

On day two, the families became even more actively involved in the train trip. They brought in refrigerator boxes that, with some paint and ingenuity, became a passenger train with seats, windows and wheels. Staff provided hats and uniforms for budding train engineers and conductors, and special clothing for the passengers, as well. Clanging bells, whistles, train schedules, tickets and itineraries added to the atmosphere.

While the children were busy transforming refrigerator boxes into a passenger train and getting the train station ready for selling tickets, parents reviewed train schedules, read maps and calculated the amount of time the entire trip would take. They also organized and planned activities for the train ride. Finally, the children sold tickets, distributed train schedules and escorted parents and staff to seats on the newly constructed Even Start Express.

On the day of the real train excursion, families gathered at the Family Resource Center and boarded vans for their trip to the train station. Once there, they boarded the train and began their 30-mile adventure. Parents brought bags filled with books, markers and paper just in case the children needed more activities. In between time spent talking, gazing at the countryside and exploring the train's interior, the children drew and wrote, as parents and staff jotted down comments and exclamations. These recorded treasures were bound into books for the families to take home.

Donna and Crystal charted the trip on a map. Once the passengers reached their destination, they were greeted by additional staff who took pictures to add to the scrapbook. "Crystal and I took our first train ride. I can't believe it! We had such a good time together!" Donna said following the trip.

The next leg of the journey was a trip to the public library. Once there, the children rushed to an authentic gingerbread house exhibit. Parents joined them and marveled at the intricacies of the house, while the children gazed at all the icing and candy and wondered if the house was really edible. The librarian greeted the families and gave an introduction to the library, encouraging the families to visit any time. She invited the families to the children's corner where she read *The Gingerbread Boy* to the group. After she finished, families explored the library, checked out books and traveled home. Donna and Crystal headed for home laden with an activity bag, books and an adventure to share with the rest of their family. They also left with a sense of accomplishment and confidence.

In such an integrated approach, it is impossible to discriminate among the core services—parenting and adult education, early childhood education, and parents and children learning together—because they occur simultaneously within the family literacy experiences. Goals and activities are carefully planned for each component, but integration of services is reflected within the programming. The web plan on page 88 illustrates how services were integrated within the train trip experience.

As illustrated in these various examples, parent participants in SRES become aware of the significant connection between literacy experiences and learning. They begin to understand their role as their children's most influential teachers and to view learning as a lifelong process. Parents and children learning together is at the heart of the family literacy program.

Facilitating and Documenting Progress with Family Portfolios

Another cornerstone of Even Start programs is respect. Staff members focus on strengths rather than deficits, recognizing that all parents' aspirations are similar

WEB PLAN

• Read *Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg
• Discuss guidance strategies for traveling with children.
• Develop a list of things to do for and during the train trip with the children.
• Create an activity bag for each child for the train ride.
• Read *The Gingerbread Boy* by Paul Galdone.
PARENTING EDUCATION
• Read *Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg.
• Chart proposed train trip on the map.
• Calculate amount of time for the entire trip.
• Practice songs and fingerplays about trains.
• Read *The Gingerbread Boy* by Paul Galdone.
• Learn about resources within the public library and check out books.
ADULT EDUCATION
TRAIN TRIP
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
• Read *Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg.
• Explore a variety of wheels in science area.
• Sing songs and fingerplays about trains.
• Make a list of things to do for the train trip.
• Set up train station and sell tickets.
• Construct a train with refrigerator boxes.
• Role-play various railroad occupations.
• Read *The Gingerbread Boy* by Paul Galdone.
• Explore resources within public library and check out books.
PARENTS AND CHILDREN LEARNING TOGETHER
• Read *Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg.
• Create a "things to do" list for the train trip.
• Explore together a variety of wheels in the science area.
• Sing songs and fingerplays about trains.
• Purchase train tickets and ride Even Start Express.
• Create activity bags for the train ride.
• Read *The Gingerbread Boy* by Paul Galdone.
• Explore resources within the public library and check out books.

but their access to resources greatly differs. In keeping with this philosophy, SRES staff help parents evaluate their needs and interests, set meaningful goals, assume responsibility for those goals and document progress. This journey with parents is recorded in a family portfolio that provides staff with a means for evaluating individual family progress and overall program effectiveness.

SRES staff members define family portfolio assessment as a process whereby the parents and families maintain ownership of the portfolio. Parents have primary responsibility for goal setting, prioritizing goals and evaluating progress. Parents, staff and children might make contributions to the portfolio by documenting progress and selecting samples for inclusion.

Portfolio development begins with the first contact. The parent may indicate a desire to work on a GED or to receive parenting information. At that time, parents receive a description of the program and are invited to an Open House at the Family Resource Center or for a more informal visit. Some families may complete a form indicating interest in the Even Start program, while others may need time to understand, and agree to become involved in, all three components of the program—adult education, parenting education and children's education.

Home visits are critical in fostering communication between parents and staff and are, therefore, an integral part of SRES. Much of what goes into a portfolio may be obtained during the home visit. A representative home visit follows:

Karen answers the door holding her baby, Seth, while Annie, her kindergarten child, stands behind her. Karen invites the staff in and one teacher spreads a quilt on the floor for Seth and lays out some push toys and teethers. Annie joins them and expresses delight when the teacher brings out the "The Three Little Pigs" storykit. Together, they all share the story, while Seth watches happily. Karen marvels at how well Annie can fill in the words, "Then I'll huff and puff and blow your house down." Without even realizing it, Karen finds herself also entranced by the story, and confidently chimes in with her daughter. While the teacher continues the dramatic play with Annie, Karen shares her situation and her feelings with the other staff person, who listens and displays respect for the parent by recognizing the importance of what she was saying.

The staff person then provides more information about the Even Start program, reviewing the handbook and answering questions. The adults discuss problems such as child care for Seth and the staff members provide a list of child care providers. Karen indicates her interest in and commitment to all three components of the program and receives a family questionnaire, informed consent and permission forms, and a Family Interest Survey (see Figures 1 and 2). The teachers leave toys and books for the children, summarize the visit and encourage Karen to call if she has any questions. The staff arranges to pick up the forms the next day and ask about scheduling a home visit the next week or having Karen visit the Family Resource Center.

Home visits offer opportunities for staff to model positive adult-child interactions. SRES staff bring open-ended activities for children and materials for parents and often illustrate how activities can be done and materials used.

Figure 1: Family Action Plan
Family Interests

X Child Development	X Fatigue	___ Driver's License
___ Health Check-ups	___ Fire Safety	___ Emergency Clothing
___ Emergency Food	___ Family Counseling	___ Churches
___ Home Management	___ Reading	___ Math
___ Aid to Families with Dependent Children	___ General Education X Degree (GED)	___ Women, Infants and Children (WIC)
___ Children with Special Needs	___ Spouse Abuse	___ Marriage Counseling
___ Finding a Job	___ Anger/Hostility	___ Job Training
*X Depression	___ Supplemental Security Income (SSI)	___ Meal Planning and Preparation
___ Hobbies	___ Child Care	___ Child Abuse and Neglect
___ Emergency Housing	X Child Guidance	___ Household Safety and Sanitation
___ Fuel Assistance	___ Exercise/Physical Fitness	X Home Weatherization
___ Alcohol/Drug Abuse	___ Computer Skills	X Being a Parent
X Dieting	X Budgeting	___ Helping My Child with School
___ Family Planning	___ Nutrition for Preschoolers	___ Talking to the Teacher
___ Dental Care	___ Immunizations	___ Other_____
___ Volunteering/Community Involvement	___ Decision-Making Within the Family	

*Priority

(Adapted from Portage Project & C. Brown)

Figure 2

What are some of the things you like to do with your children?
?

Name some of your children's favorite things to do.
watch tv, play cards, draw

Name some places in the community you would like to visit and learn more about.
my child's classroom

Name some concerns parents face in raising a family.
knowing what's in the child's best interest

Name a craft or hobby you would like to learn more about.
crosswords

Name a craft, hobby or skill you can share with others.
none

Because some families do not initially feel comfortable with the home visits, several visits or contacts at the Family Resource Center may be necessary before parents are ready to discuss their needs and interests. Some parents may not be ready to set goals until they have been involved in the program for several months. Goal setting occurs after the parent has developed a trusting relationship with staff.

When the parent is ready, staff spend time with the parent discussing the Family Action Plan and the parent's interests. The staff focuses on helping the parent set priorities and empowering the parent to identify and use resources.

When Karen completed the Family Action Plan-Family Interests form, she indicated that she felt tired, depressed and overwhelmed by parenting responsibilities. She also indicated that she wanted to complete her GED and still be able to help Annie with school work. As a result of this meeting, the staff offered Karen a list of counseling resources to address her problems and concerns. She was encouraged to take the initiative with these contacts.

Staff also assist parents by mapping out on paper the personal relationships or resources that may be available to support the parent. Visual mapping helps the parent identify persons in their network who are reliable, and new agencies or resources that may be supportive. It also helps staff evaluate what levels of involvement a person is capable of at a given time. The parent may also use visual mapping to examine his or her level of self-reliance.

The second stage in the family portfolio process involves the Family Action Plan-Family Interest Survey, as well as information gathered from discussions with the parent. Information from both of these sources help staff as they work with the parent to set and prioritize goals. Karen's Family Action Plan provides a representative sample of this procedure (see Figure 3).

The Family Action Plan helps the parent meet goals. Once a parent identifies a goal, for example, the parent analyzes it and, with assistance from the staff, identifies the steps that will be needed to reach that goal and identifies people who might be supportive or provide assistance. Parents sometimes begin with a long-term goal, such as Karen's desire to complete the GED. Staff may help Karen identify the steps or short-term goals that would be needed to achieve success on the longer-term goal. An example of Karen's Plan of Action can be found in Figure 4.

Figure 3
Family Action Plan

Family Interests/Needs		Priority	Date Initiated	Date Completed
1. *Depression *Fatigue Counseling	• contact Human Services for appointment • personal counseling	High	9/94 Set up appointment 9/15	Appointment scheduled for 9/20 & 10/22
2. Complete GED	• work on math • essay writing • attend class		Ongoing 10/94	Test May 6
3. Child Development	• read materials and become familiar with stages of development and behaviors to expect (infant son, 7 months)		10/94 12/94	
4. Helping My Child with School	• attend Kindergarten Open House • attend Parent/Teacher conference • use resources from Even Start (daughter in kindergarten)			Attended Open House 9/94
5. Home Weatherization	• needs to look up information			
6. Budgeting				
7. Dieting		Low		

*Priority

Adapted from a form developed by the Portage Project & C. Brown)

A review of Karen's Plan of Action indicates that in order to attend GED classes she must find child care. The visual mapping of her support network shows that she needed an outside resource for child care. The staff provided her with a list of child care facilities. Karen also indicated that she wanted to gain confidence in writing. During several home visits, staff helped her revise some of her writing. GED classes gave her additional skills. Her writing progress was documented with writing samples taken in October and in January that reflected Karen's growth.

Karen also wanted to help her child with school work. She worked on this goal by reading to her child. These times are reflected on her Plan of Action, as recorded in Figure 5.

SRES staff keep progress or anecdotal notes, records of home visits and other documents to track progress. The Home Visit record of October 11 documents progress toward Karen's goals and all components of the Even Start program. This progress is illustrated in Figure 6.

Home visits serve as a time to foster self-evaluation and to learn about the parents' and children's experiences. Parents are given an opportunity to provide feedback on the activities and materials used during the visit. Home visits are planned to help parents develop in all three components of the Even Start program. As staff

Figure 4: Family Action Plan
Plan of Action

Objective: Complete GED

Family Resources: help from husband, daughter's support

Date Started	Steps	Who	Outcomes	Date Completed
9/94	Attend GED Class			
	*Need backup child care	List of child care centers		
	*Family obligation (no planned crisis situations)			
12/94	*Contact friend for exchanging babysitting	Friend at Family Center		
12/94	*Contact child care center for extended hours	Director of Child Care Center		
	Essay Writing			
	*Gain confidence by practicing writing	GED and ES teachers		
	*Work on revisions in home visits			
	*Write in journal			
	Work on Math Skills	Work on in class with teacher		
	*More confident here than with writing			

(Adapted from a form developed by the Florida Project & C. Brown)

plan the next home visit, they become aware of materials that might help document progress in each of the areas. At times, anecdotal notes of parent/child interactions during story reading are included in the portfolio.

Items that parents might include in the portfolios as indicators of their own progress are photographs, journal writing entries, test scores on GED work, writing samples, class assignments, computer disks, audiotapes and videotapes. Children might include art and writing samples, photographs and tapes. Staff might include their observations of parents' and children's progress.

The parent and staff evaluate the portfolio material throughout the year. Frequently, this evaluation occurs during a home visit, when goals may be modified, updated or added. The following description of a home visit with Karen and her children chronicles the evaluation and celebration of growth that has occurred.

Karen answers the door. Seth clings to her ankles and solemnly watches the Even Start staff enter the living room. Karen says she cannot understand why he is so shy

lately; before, no one was a stranger. Now he seems to take a while to warm up to people. The staff reassures Karen that this behavior is normal for a child his age. Now that Seth can crawl easily and is beginning to pull himself up, he is much more mobile. His world now includes new dimensions of experience, and he needs to know his Mommy is nearby during his adventures.

Just then Annie's school bus pulls up and Annie is surprised to see the center personnel. She pulls one of them into the kitchen to show her a drawing on the refrigerator. Annie and the staff person discuss her school work while Annie eats a snack in the kitchen. Annie's special time gives Karen and the other staff person an opportunity to talk about Karen's Action Plan, while Seth plays with toys that the staff had brought.

Karen had found a child care center that both Seth and she like. She is glad that it has worked out and she has been able to attend the adult education classes in the Family Center. Karen and the staff person celebrate the growth represented by Karen's ability to make arrangements and by her increasing self-reliance. They talk about Karen's classes. Karen indicates that her husband supports her going to school, but does not always like her studying at night. Karen and the staff person explore some solutions, such as leaving Seth at the child care center longer on some days so that she would have time to study, or exchanging child care times with another parent at the center. Karen indicates that she would think about it, call the child care center and talk to her new friend about possible exchanges.

Karen shares the journal that she has been keeping, complete with her own thoughts, as well as Annie's drawings and writings. Many of Annie's samples are a result of Karen and Annie's reading books from Family Resource Center storykits. The staff talks about Karen's reading with Annie and about Karen's growing ability to express herself in writing.

Figure 5: Family Action Plan
Plan of Action

Objective: Helping My Child with School Reading

Family Resources: _____

Date Started	Steps	Who	Outcomes	Date Completed
9/94	Helping My Child with School			
	• Attend Open House to talk with teacher	K (mom)	Getting off to a good start with A's Kindergarten teacher	9/94
	• Read and talk about article "How To Talk to Your Child's Teacher"	BC (Even Start staff)	Feel more comfortable talking to teacher	Home Visit
	Reading to My Child	K & BC	Learn about the importance of reading to child. Get free books to read at home	Begin 10/94
	• Read to My Child More Often	K	Children will like to read and learn new things	

Adapted from a form developed by the Portage Project & C. Brown

Figure 6: Southern Region Even Start Home Visit Record

Family Code # 1555 Date: 10/14 Time: 2:00 Teacher: DC

Children and Adults Present: S. (infant son); K. (mom); A. (Kindergarten child)

Home Visit Emphasis: Reading with Children

Adult Education Activities/Materials: Essay Writing

K. had been assigned an essay in GED class. Worked together to change outline into sentence form.

Early Childhood Activities/Materials: The Three Little Pigs storykit

Used storykit and dramatized story with A.
Read several new board books from the lending library with S. Left Mother Goose and What Do Babies Do with K. so she can read them this week.

Parenting/Parent-Child Activities: Information on use of storykits

K. was unable to attend the workshop. DC brought two articles from the session to discuss.
Talked about how to get A. involved in activities, especially when K. has homework.

Parent Comments: K. had several personal issues to discuss and wants additional counseling.

Follow-Up: Set up visit with Mental Health.
*Note: K. did set up another appointment for 10/22.

Next Visit: Bring child development materials for S.

This home visit illustrates how staff help parents problem solve and celebrate their successes. It also illustrates the benefit of remapping new support systems. Karen, for example, was able to add the name of the child care center teacher and a new friend to her network of child care support.

The family portfolio is completed at the end of the year when staff write a narrative summarizing the parent's accomplishments. The narrative describes the parent's needs at the beginning of the program, identifies goals the parent initially established and lists activities that appealed to the parent during the year. It may include a description of the parent's participation and how that participation affected the parent and the family. Overall, it includes a comprehensive profile of the parent's progress during the program period.

In summary, the Even Start program is designed to meet the needs and interests of the particular families it serves. Program activities differ from year to year and from person to person. Family portfolios also differ greatly, depending upon individual needs and interests. SRES activities are "works in progress," or passages in the journey of serving families.

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Especially for Parents

Linda Nelson

Most parents vividly remember the birth of their children. We recall those special moments when we first held the tiny being that completed the miraculous creation cycle. The intense feelings of love, joy, relief and awe were soon joined by ones of fear, anxiety and inadequacy when full realization hit. What a responsibility! At first we were concerned only with the baby's basic physical needs: feeding, diapering, bathing and sleeping. Little do we realize that right from the very first minutes of contact we, as parents, begin a teaching and learning experience that continues for the rest of our lives.

★ **As parents we really are our children's most important teachers**

During the earliest feeding activities, we begin communicating and interacting. We seek and reinforce our infant's eye contact and assign intentionality to reflexive responses such as burping, sneezing and coughing. We reproduce and reinforce early "cooing" vocalizations. We notice and respond appropriately to our baby's differentiated cry patterns that signal discomfort, anger or pain.

As the baby matures, we begin to play socially interactive games. We start with "peek-a-boo," "piggy toes" and "where's your eyes, nose, belly, etc." and proceed to "please and thank you" and "give Mommy or Daddy hugs or kisses." We believe babies are able to participate actively in communication long before they can speak. Therefore, we model and demonstrate the rules of language while performing daily caretaking and nurturing activities. By providing repetitive, predictable language, we structure the language environment and guide our children through what would otherwise have been a verbal maze.

★ **As parents we really are our children's most important teachers**

Unfortunately for many families, life has become a hectic, rushed routine. Parents might feel they have little time or opportunity to communicate or interact with their children, beyond issuing directive commands. They may *not* see themselves as their children's teachers, yet research tells us they *are*. While they may consider themselves untrained, inexperienced and inadequate, the benefit of positive parent-child interactions are limitless. Parent involvement and interaction *are* a significant factor in children's learning, especially in early language and literacy development.

★ **As parents we really are our children's most important teachers**

Once we believed that children learned to talk at home and how to read and write at school. Not so! Improved observation shows us that early literacy (reading and writing) and problem-solving skills develop as a part of a natural integrated process at the same time that speech and language skills are developing. And most important, a child's attitude toward learning is developing at the same time. Just as children are bombarded with spoken language from the moment of birth, so can they be immersed in print. If given opportunities to experience print and "writing" activities, young children will use the same developmental strategies they use in learning spoken language to learn the rules of written language long before they go to school.

Linda Nelson is currently Director of Special Education Services for Johnson, Alexander, Massac and Pulaski counties in Illinois.

★ **As parents we really are our children's most important teachers**

Parents vary considerably as to when and what they read to their young children, but most of us share print experiences with our babies. Newspapers, magazines, catalogues, cans, cartons, bottles and boxes are part of our children's lives, even if the traditional children's storybooks are not. We talk naturally about the print all around us as we pour the cereal, get the milk carton out of the refrigerator, open the bread wrapper, etc. Evidence of this successful "teaching" can be found in the marks and messages children draw or "write" in pudding, icing and soap, as well as in the dirt or sand. As parents, we incorporate early literacy activities and games into daily caretaking activities as routinely and naturally as we use conversation. Perhaps because it is so routine and natural, we sometimes fail to recognize the important contribution we make to our children's literacy development.

★ **As parents we really are our children's most important teachers**

While interacting with our toddlers during routine caretaking and home maintenance activities, parents often develop and participate in important manipulative, symbolic and problem-solving activities. While stacking the dishwasher, we allow children to put "the big plates here, the little ones there"; while folding the laundry, we discuss the colors, the stripes, the plaids. We "put the towels here and place the shirts there." When bathing children, we blow great big bubbles and talk about little bubbles; we make the rubber ducky move up the bathtub by splashing wildly behind it. As we work, play, talk and discover with our children, we really are their first and most important teachers.

★ **As parents we really are our children's most important teachers**

As their overall language skills continue to develop, our children learn to use one object to represent another. Through symbolic play, we can enjoy the pretend world of role-playing with our children. Once our children learn to pretend, we "raise the ante" by posing such challenging questions as, "What will happen if. . . ?" and "What will happen next?"

★ **As parents we really are our children's most important teachers**

These four "Teaching Tips" are recommended for parents who want to improve their skills and perhaps enhance the natural language and literacy activities that occur in their homes. First, **TAKE TIME!** Take as much time as is possible to involve your children in daily routine activities. Second, **WAIT!** Wait for your children to initiate activities. Wait for them to respond and do what they can do for themselves, instead of anticipating and doing for them. Third, **TALK!** Talk, talk, talk. A general rule is: "If you think it, say it." Talk to and with your children, not at or about them. Fourth, **KEEP ON TRYING!** Don't give up or become frustrated; keep on trying with an "I can" attitude. Remember that even though the children may not appear to be cooperating or paying attention, they may be taking in a lot more information than we might think!

As our children's first and most important teachers, let's celebrate the opportunities we have to support our children in their learning. Let's relish the moment and enjoy this very special role by becoming actively involved in talking with and guiding our children as they develop the skills to become thinkers, readers, writers and excited learners. Let's celebrate as we share with them the richness of our family traditions and our acceptance of others' traditions. Let's develop a partnership with classroom teachers to make the transition from home to school as comfortable as possible.

★ **As parents, we are our children's most important teachers—celebrate and enjoy!**

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